John Gray, Ph.D.

With a New Introduction by the Author

#1 *New York Times* Bestseller

MEN Are from MARS, WOMEN Are from VENUS

The Classic Guide to Understanding the Opposite Sex

Mantesh

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Mantesh

Dedication

This book is dedicated
with deepest love and affection
to my wife, Bonnie Gray.
Her love, vulnerability, wisdom, and strength
have inspired me to be the best I can be
and to share what we have learned together.

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Mantesh

Introduction to the Paperback Edition

This book has truly helped millions of readers, myself included. It will probably assist you as well. Without these new insights I don't think I would be happily married today or be such a dedicated father to my children. The same issues that would frustrate me twenty-three years ago in my relationship with my wife, Bonnie, are the same issues that occasionally come up today. The difference today is that I am more tolerant, accepting, and understanding. I can more correctly interpret her words and reactions and know better how to respond. I may be an expert about gender differences and communication, but Bonnie and my daughters are still sometimes a mystery to me. If anything, this book helps us to be more tolerant and forgiving when someone doesn't respond the way we think he or she should. Fortunately perfection is not a requirement for creating great relationships.

Gender insight helps us to be more tolerant and forgiving when someone doesn't respond the way we think he or she should.

With increasing stresses at work and with higher expectations of lasting romance at home, relationships today are challenging for almost everyone. Gaining a better understanding of where your partner is coming from will certainly make your relationships easier. Increasing tolerance for our differences does not mean passive acceptance of a problematic or passionless relationship. Instead, this healthy adaptation is based on real insight that helps us to understand our partners better and respond in ways that are more loving and will inspire the best in them.

You cannot, nor should you ever try to, change your partner. That is his or her job. Your job is to change the ways you communicate, react, and respond to your partner. With new insight, you have the added wisdom and power to adjust your approach. With better communication you can more effectively give the support you seek, and in return, you will be more successful in getting the support you want as well.

With new insight you have the added wisdom and power to change your approach rather than seeking to change your partner.

A few people misuse the concepts in this book. They use the examples and explanations to justify not making important adjustments that could make a relationship work better. For example, I point out that men often need to go to their cave to recharge from the day. This, however, doesn't justify staying

in the cave all the time. On the other hand, I also point out that women generally have a greater need to share feelings as a way of coping with stress. This doesn't mean a woman can just go on and on or expect a man to stop and listen to whatever she has to say whenever she feels like it.

Unfortunately even good insights can be misused. But if you are seeking to use these insights to understand your partner better, to respect others in the ways that are important to them, and to communicate your needs in a way that they can understand, then this book can work for you.

If you are seeking to use these insights to respect others in the ways that are important to them, this book can work for you.

In my travels, while waiting for a plane or while signing books at an event, there is *always* some couple that will approach me with a similar story. They were previously divorced and after reading "the book" they are now happily remarried to each other. When I wrote *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus* , twelve years ago, I knew it would enrich relationships, and even save many on the brink of divorce, but I had no idea so many people would return to their partners after a divorce or breakup and then start over with each other and make their relationship work.

Certainly, there are some people who say it didn't save a troubled relationship, but in most cases they go on to say they were better off without their partner. Many people report that reading this book after a failed relationship helped them to make sense of past relationships that didn't work out. This then gave them the encouragement to move on and the skills to successfully find love.

Most people read this book simply to enrich the quality of their relationships. For certain, you will discover new insights to help you improve communication and be more successful in achieving your personal goals. Even if one idea helps you to understand and support your partner, friend, business associate, parent, or child, then it is certainly well worth your interest and investment of time. One small but significant change can have a lasting and dramatic impact.

Ironically the same ideas that enrich a healthy relationship will also assist couples in overcoming more challenging problems. This book does not directly address the challenges of a "dysfunctional relationship" but it does provide a new twist on the ways we communicate and interpret the other sex. With this insight, communication is automatically improved. With a sense of greater cooperation, hope increases, and then love is often reignited. With love *and* good communication most problems, even the "big problems," can be solved and resolved. By first addressing the small problems, the bigger problems sometimes just vanish or are easily resolved.

The same ideas that enrich a healthy relationship will also assist couples in overcoming more challenging problems.

During the twenty years I have been teaching the ideas in this book, the delivery has evolved, but the basic ideas in this book are still the foundation. Instead of adding more chapters to this book, I went on to write more books building on these basic ideas. You can think of this book as a primer for understanding and communicating with the opposite sex. It can then be applied in practically all kinds of relationships and at all ages.

In my subsequent books I went on to *apply* the ideas of *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus* to different areas of life where gender understanding is essential.

- Regarding finding a date, dating, living together, and the engagement process, I wrote *Mars and Venus on a Date.*
- Regarding long-term relationships and marriage, I wrote *Mars and Venus Together Forever.*
- Regarding the secrets of great sex, I wrote *Mars and Venus in the Bedroom.*
- For individuals recovering from the loss of love, whether through breaking up, divorce, or a death, I wrote *Mars and Venus Starting Over.*
- For those in healthy relationships wishing to sustain those good feelings and grow in love, I wrote *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus Book of Days* , a series of short essays for each day of the year.
- For couples experiencing more challenging problems like infidelity, violence, and addictions, I wrote *Mars and Venus in Love.*
- For parents wanting to communicate more effectively with their little Martians and Venusians, I wrote *Children Are from Heaven.*
- For those seeking to achieve a competitive edge through gender-based communication skills, I wrote *How to Get What You Want at Work.*
- For those suffering from serious illness and seeking empowerment through practical self-healing skills and techniques, I wrote *Practical Miracles for Mars and Venus.*
- For those seeking greater personal success, I wrote *How to Get What You Want and Want What You Have.*
- Finally, in response to recent research on our hormonal differences as well as differences in brain chemistry, I developed and wrote the *Mars and Venus Diet and Exercise Solution.* Gender insight also directly relates to our health, happiness, weight management, and ability to create and sustain the hormones of lasting romance.

Writing these different books has been an exciting journey for me, because as an expert on the differences between men and women, there is always so much more to learn. Not only are our styles of communicating different but our brains, hormones, stress reactions, nutritional requirements, and exercise requirements are different as well. With each passing year more studies are published that verify and help popularize these essential insights.

We are all conditioned to a great degree by small but consistent experiences of our partner.

Without an understanding that men and women are supposed to be different, it is such a temptation to think men shouldn't be "that way" or women shouldn't react "that way." For some, it sounds fine to say men are women should be the same, but it is unrealistic and will actually make things worse. When we expect our partners to be more like us, we are automatically giving them the message that they are not good enough the way they are. "You are not good enough" is definitely not a loving message, even though you may be feeling very loving when you think it.

Women particularly feel a warmth, a love, while they are planning to improve their man. It is certainly true that a woman's love will inspire a man to become all that he can be, but it is up to him to make that change. Her job is to communicate her love in a way that truly supports him. The same, of course, is true for men. It is not a man's job to fix a woman. She doesn't need "fixing." Most of the time she just needs more understanding and affection and her heart will warm up again and her eyes will begin to sparkle.

Historically we have always known men and women are different, but until *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus* was published, most people didn't have a clear reference point to understand our differences in a positive light and in a manner that made sense. At this historic time, when men and women are working side by side for the first time and are expecting more romance and intimacy at home than in previous generations, this new insight is essential. Today, without a positive way to interpret our different reactions, we can easily blame our problems on our partners rather than our own approach. Expecting or demanding that men and women think, feel, react, and respond in the same way will only set you up for failure and disappointment in your relationships.

We too easily blame our problems on our partners rather than our own approach.

The various insights and examples from *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus* help us to understand our common differences in a positive light. This doesn't imply that all people experience these differences exactly as I point them out. Every person is certainly unique. But in certain ways many men share characteristics that most women just don't understand, and women share certain characteristics that just don't make sense to most men. Now we can understand each other better and also not be hard on our partners when they forget.

The differences I focus on are certainly common, but there are exceptions. Generally speaking, about 10 percent of women will relate more to being from Mars. This is often simply a result of being born with higher testosterone levels than most other women. Even when this is the case, these women still have all the female hormones for pregnancy and childbirth. For these women, this book is often a revelation that helps them identify their feminine needs and gives them more support and permission to nurture their female side. As we explore these differences together, keep in mind I am not describing how women and men *should* be. I am simply pointing out how and why men and women commonly misunderstand each other when and if these differences show up.

When men and women are single for a long time, the differences are sometimes not as defined. These common differences will generally show up the most after getting involved in an intimate

relationship, having children together, or when we are under a lot of stress. In addition to gender differences, many of our differences have to do with our own unique personalities and temperaments, as well as the social influences of our families and of society. The differences I focus on between men and women are primarily caused by brain and hormonal differences.

Gender differences show up the most after getting involved in an intimate relationship, having children together, or when we are under a lot of stress.

This book does not address or provide solutions to all the different kinds of relationship issues. Certainly there are many problems in relationships that have nothing to do with understanding the opposite sex. Yet even these problems, like drug and alcohol addiction, affairs and infidelity, depression and sickness, along with seemingly irreconcilable differences and dysfunctional character defects, are all dramatically complicated by a lack of understanding of the opposite sex. Even with these big problems, by first focusing on solving the little problems with better communication and more consideration, our hearts begin to open and a positive and powerful transformation can occur.

Twenty years ago, when I began developing and teaching these ideas, they were very controversial, but today they have become widely accepted in our society and are referred to at all levels of education as well as in most spiritual traditions. I came to these conclusions after counseling thousands of men and women. Repeatedly, women would have the same complaints about men and their husbands. These common complaints were very different from the complaints men had. Men would often complain: She is making a big deal out of nothing; she is over-reacting; she is withholding sex; or she is unreasonable. And then when a man was considering divorce his common statement was: “No matter what I do it is not enough to make her happy.” Rarely did I hear women say this. Instead women would often complain: He doesn’t listen; he is inattentive; he is no longer romantic; he doesn’t complement me; he is less affectionate; or he is self-centered. When considering divorce, a woman would say, “I give and give, but I don’t get back. I have nothing left to give.” This is a far cry from a man’s basic frustration that his wife is just not happy and as a result he feels like giving up.

Men often complain, She is over-reacting and women complain, He doesn’t listen!

By remembering men are from Mars, women are from Venus at times of frustration, worry, or disappointment, instead of thinking something is wrong with your partner or your relationship, you may discover that you are misinterpreting the situation. With a more accurate interpretation you can then adjust your actions and responses so that you begin to get more of what you are wanting. For

example, when a man is distant, rather than assuming he is not interested in her or imagining that he is mad at her, a woman can instead realize that he is just recuperating from a stressful day. With this insight she is free from worry and knows to give him space to be in his "cave" and eventually he will come out. Or when a woman is talking about the problems of her day, rather than assuming she is looking for solutions and giving solutions, a man can instead recognize that she is just needing to talk about her day and as a result she will feel better. With this insight, he is free to relax and listen without trying to interrupt with solutions. As in both of these examples, when we know what is really happening and what is required, relationships become so much easier.

This book has been so helpful to so many people because it simply helps us to correctly interpret the situation. After reading a few pages you will begin to laugh at your own mistakes. With this lighthearted reaction it becomes easier to relax and not take yourself or your partner's mistakes so seriously. When we can lighten up it becomes easy to remember all the good times and the qualities and characteristics of someone rather than focusing on the negative. It is also a comfort to know that your issues are similar to others. So many people report that it seems I have been following them around and listening in on their conversations.

When we correctly interpret a situation it is never as bad as we thought.

Often on my travels, both men and women will come up to me and say, "Oh, you wrote *the book."* It is "the book" because it is the book they refer to again and again. I hope that after you read this book you will refer back to it again and again. It is unrealistic to think that in a few days we can learn a completely different language. Likewise, it is unrealistic to assume that after one or two readings your partner or you will be able to remember the subtleties of our differences. Use this book to let yourself or your partner ease up on each other, and you will be using it to create more love in your life. Above all else, love is giving, compassionate, and forgiving. If these insights help you to keep your heart open, then they have served their purpose.

Twelve years after writing *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus* it is a great pleasure to share how these ideas have helped millions of men and women around the world. On a lighter note, I feel like a proud father bragging about my children. But on a different note I feel greatly honored. Each day my life is enriched by the comments and appreciation of others who have read and benefited from these ideas. I am most grateful and I thank you for opening your heart to consider these ideas as a helpful guide in your journey to give and receive love. The world certainly needs it.

Thank you for letting me make a difference in your life and may you always grow in love and feel your greatness every day. You certainly deserve it.

John Gray
June 12, 2003
Mill Valley, California

Introduction

A week after our daughter Lauren was born, my wife, Bonnie, and I were completely exhausted. Each night Lauren kept waking us. Bonnie had been torn in the delivery and was taking painkillers. She could barely walk. After five days of staying home to help, I went back to work. She seemed to be getting better.

While I was away she ran out of pain pills. Instead of calling me at the office, she asked one of my brothers, who was visiting, to purchase more. My brother, however, did not return with the pills. Consequently, she spent the whole day in pain, taking care of a newborn.

I had no idea that her day had been so awful. When I returned home she was very upset. I misinterpreted the cause of her distress and thought she was blaming me.

She said, "I've been in pain all day… . I ran out of pills. I've been stranded in bed and nobody cares!"

I said defensively, "Why didn't you call me?"

She said, "I asked your brother, but he forgot! I've been waiting for him to return all day. What am I supposed to do? I can barely walk. I feel so deserted!"

At this point I exploded. My fuse was also very short that day. I was angry that she hadn't called me. I was furious that she was blaming me when I didn't even know she was in pain. After exchanging a few harsh words, I headed for the door. I was tired, irritable, and had heard enough. We had both reached our limits.

Then something started to happen that would change my life.

Bonnie said, "Stop, please don't leave. This is when I need you the most. I'm in pain. I haven't slept in days. Please listen to me."

I stopped for a moment to listen.

She said, "John Gray, you're a fair-weather friend! As long as I'm sweet, loving Bonnie you are here for me, but as soon as I'm not, you walk right out that door."

Then she paused, and her eyes filled up with tears. As her tone shifted she said, "Right now I'm in pain. I have nothing to give, this is when I need you the most. Please, come over here and hold me. You don't have to say anything. I just need to feel your arms around me. Please don't go."

I walked over and silently held her. She wept in my arms. After a few minutes, she thanked me for not leaving. She told me that she just needed to feel me holding her.

At that moment I started to realize the real meaning of love—unconditional love. I had always thought of myself as a loving person. But she was right. I had been a fair-weather friend. As long as she was happy and nice, I loved back. But if she was unhappy or upset, I would feel blamed and then argue or distance myself.

That day, for the first time, I didn't leave her. I stayed, and it felt great. I succeeded in giving to her when she really needed me. This felt like real love. Caring for another person. Trusting in our love. Being there at her hour of need. I marveled at how easy it was for me to support her when I was shown the way.

How had I missed this? She just needed me to go over and hold her. Another woman would have instinctively known what Bonnie needed. But as a man, I didn't know that touching, holding, and listening were so important to her. By recognizing these differences I began to learn a new way of relating to my wife. I would have never believed we could resolve conflict so easily.

In my previous relationships, I had become indifferent and unloving at difficult times, simply because I didn't know what else to do. As a result, my first marriage had been very painful and difficult. This incident with Bonnie revealed to me how I could change this pattern.

It inspired my seven years of research to help develop and refine the insights about men and women in this book. By learning in very practical and specific terms about how men and women are different, I suddenly began to realize that my marriage did not need to be such a struggle. With this new awareness of our differences Bonnie and I were able to improve dramatically our communication and enjoy each other more.

By continuing to recognize and explore our differences we have discovered new ways to improve all our relationships. We have learned about relationships in ways that our parents never knew and therefore could not have taught us. As I began sharing these insights with my counseling clients, their relationships were also enriched. Literally thousands of those who attended my weekend seminars saw their relationships dramatically transform overnight.

Seven years later individuals and couples still report successful benefits. I receive pictures of happy couples and their children, with letters thanking me for saving their marriage. Although their love saved their marriage, they would have divorced if they hadn't gained a deeper understanding of the opposite sex.

Susan and Jim had been married nine years. Like most couples they started out loving each other, but after years of increasing frustration and disappointment they lost their passion and decided to give up. Before getting a divorce, however, they attended my weekend relationship seminar. Susan said, "We have tried everything to make this relationship work. We are just too different."

During the seminar they were amazed to learn that their differences were not only normal but were to be expected. They were comforted that other couples had experienced the same patterns of relating. In just two days, Susan and Jim gained a totally new understanding of men and women.

They fell in love again. Their relationship miraculously changed. No longer heading toward a divorce, they looked forward to sharing the rest of their lives together. Jim said, "This information about our differences has given me back my wife. This is the greatest gift I could ever receive. We are loving each other again."

Six years later, when they invited me to visit their new home and family, they were still loving each other. They were still thanking me for helping them to understand each other and stay married.

Although almost everyone would agree that men and women are different, *how* different is still undefined for most people. Many books in the last ten years have forged ahead, attempting to define these differences. Though important advances have been made, many books are one-sided and unfortunately reinforce mistrust and resentment toward the opposite sex. One sex is generally viewed as being victimized by the other. A definitive guide was needed for understanding how *healthy* men and women are different.

To improve relations between the sexes it is necessary to create an understanding of our differences that raises selfesteem and personal dignity while inspiring mutual trust, personal responsibility, increased cooperation, and greater love. As a result of questioning more than 25,000

participants in my relationship seminars I have been able to define in positive terms how men and women are different. As you explore these differences you will feel walls of resentment and mistrust melting down.

Opening the heart results in greater forgiveness and increased motivation to give and receive love and support. With this new awareness, you will, I hope, go beyond the suggestions in this book and continue to develop ways in which you can relate lovingly to the opposite sex.

All of the principles in this book have been tested and tried. At least 90 percent of the more than 25,000 individuals questioned have enthusiastically recognized themselves in these descriptions. If you find yourself nodding your head while reading this book, saying "Yes, yes this is me you're talking about," then you are definitely not alone. And just as others have benefited from applying the insights in this book, you can as well.

Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus reveals new strategies for reducing tension in relationships and creating more love by first recognizing in great detail how men and women are different. It then offers practical suggestions about how to reduce frustration and disappointment and to create increasing happiness and intimacy. Relationships do not have to be such a struggle. Only when we do not understand one another is there tension, resentment, or conflict.

So many people are frustrated in their relationships. They love their partners, but when there is tension they do not know what to do to make things better. Through understanding how completely different men and women are, you will learn new ways for successfully relating with, listening to, and supporting the opposite sex. You will learn how to create the love you deserve. As you read this book you may wonder how anybody succeeds in having a successful relationship without it.

Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus is a manual for loving relationships. It reveals how men and women differ in all areas of their lives. Not only do men and women communicate differently but they think, feel, perceive, react, respond, love, need, and appreciate differently. They almost seem to be from different planets, speaking different languages and needing different nourishment.

This expanded understanding of our differences helps resolve much of the frustration in dealing with and trying to understand the opposite sex. Misunderstandings can then be quickly dissipated or avoided. Incorrect expectations are easily corrected. When you remember that your partner is as different from you as someone from another planet, you can relax and cooperate with the differences instead of resisting or trying to change them.

Most important, throughout this book you will learn practical techniques for solving the problems that arise from our differences. This book is not just a theoretical analysis of psychological differences but also a practical manual for how to succeed in creating loving relationships.

The truth of these principles is self-evident and can be validated by your own experience as well as by common sense. Many examples will simply and concisely express what you have always intuitively known. This validation will assist you in being you and in not losing yourself in your relationships.

In response to these insights, men often say "This is exactly how I am. Have you been following me around? I no longer feel like something is wrong with me."

Women often say "Finally my husband listens to me. I don't have to fight to be validated. When you explain our differences, my husband understands. Thank you!"

These are but a few of the thousands of inspirational comments that people have shared after

learning that men are from Mars and women are from Venus. The results of this new program for understanding the opposite sex are not only dramatic and immediate but also long lasting.

Certainly the journey of creating a loving relationship can be rocky at times. Problems are inevitable. But these problems either can be sources of resentment and rejection or can be opportunities for deepening intimacy and increasing love, caring, and trust. The insights of this book are not a "quick fix" to eliminate all problems. Instead they provide a new approach whereby your relationships can successfully support you in solving life's problems as they arise. With this new awareness you will have the tools you need to get the love you deserve and to give your partner the love and support he or she deserves.

I make many generalizations about men and women in this book. Probably you will find some comments truer than others … after all, we are unique individuals with unique experiences. Sometimes in my seminar couples and individuals will share that they relate to the examples of men and women but in an opposite way. The man relates to my descriptions of women and the woman relates to my descriptions of men. I call this role reversal.

If you discover you are experiencing role reversal, I want to assure you that everything is all right. I suggest that when you do not relate to something in this book, either ignore it (moving on to something you do relate to) or look deeper inside yourself. Many men have denied some of their masculine attributes in order to become more loving and nurturing. Likewise many women have denied some of their feminine attributes in order to earn a living in a work force that rewards masculine attributes. If this is the case, then by applying the suggestions, strategies, and techniques in this book you not only will create more passion in your relationships but also will increasingly balance your masculine and feminine characteristics.

In this book I do not directly address the question of *why* men and women are different. This is a complex question to which there are many answers, ranging from biological differences, parental influence, education, and birth order to cultural conditioning by society, the media, and history. (These issues are explored in great depth in my book *Men, Women and Relationships: Making Peace with the Opposite Sex.*)

Although the benefits of applying the insights in this book are immediate, this book does not replace the need for therapy and counseling for troubled relationships or survivors of a dysfunctional family. Even healthy individuals may need therapy or counseling at challenging times. I believe strongly in the powerful and gradual transformation that occurs in therapy, marriage counseling, and twelve-step recovery groups.

Yet repeatedly I have heard people say that they have benefited more from this new understanding of relationships than from years of therapy. I however believe that their years of therapy or recovery work provided the groundwork that allowed them to apply these insights so successfully to their life and relationships.

If our past was dysfunctional, then even after years of therapy or attending recovery groups we still need a positive picture of healthy relationships. This book provides that vision. On the other hand, even if our past has been very loving and nurturing, times have changed, and a new approach to relationships between the sexes is still required. It is essential to learn new and healthy ways of relating and communicating.

I believe everyone can benefit from the insights in this book. The only negative response I hear from participants in my seminars and in the letters I receive is "I wish someone had told me this

before."

It is never too late to increase the love in your life. You only need to learn a new way. Whether you are in therapy or not, if you want to have more fulfilling relationships with the opposite sex, this book is for you.

It is a pleasure to share with you *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*. May you always grow in wisdom and in love. May the frequency of divorce decrease and the number of happy marriages increase. Our children deserve a better world.

John Gray
November 15, 1991
Mill Valley, California

1

Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus

Imagine that men are from Mars and women are from Venus. One day long ago the Martians, looking through their telescopes, discovered the Venusians. Just glimpsing the Venusians awakened feelings they had never known. They fell in love and quickly invented space travel and flew to Venus.

The Venusians welcomed the Martians with open arms. They had intuitively known that this day would come. Their hearts opened wide to a love they had never felt before.

The love between the Venusians and Martians was magical. They delighted in being together, doing things together, and sharing together. Though from different worlds, they reveled in their differences. They spent months learning about each other, exploring and appreciating their different needs, preferences, and behavior patterns. For years they lived together in love and harmony.

Then they decided to fly to Earth. In the beginning everything was wonderful and beautiful. But the effects of Earth's atmosphere took hold, and one morning everyone woke up with a peculiar kind of *amnesia—selective amnesia!*

Both the Martians and Venusians forgot that they were from different planets and were supposed to be different. In one morning everything they had learned about their differences was erased from their memory. And since that day men and women have been in conflict.

REMEMBERING OUR DIFFERENCES

Without the awareness that we are supposed to be different, men and women are at odds with each other. We usually become angry or frustrated with the opposite sex because we have forgotten this important truth. We expect the opposite sex to be more like ourselves. We desire them to "want what we want" and "feel the way we feel."

We mistakenly assume that if our partners love us they will react and behave in certain ways—the ways we react and behave when we love someone. This attitude sets us up to be disappointed again and again and prevents us from taking the necessary time to communicate lovingly about our differences.

We mistakenly assume that if our partners love us they will react and behave in certain ways—the ways we react and behave when we love someone.

Men mistakenly expect women to think, communicate, and react the way men do; women mistakenly expect men to feel, communicate, and respond the way women do. We have forgotten that men and women are supposed to be different. As a result our relationships are filled with unnecessary friction and conflict.

Clearly recognizing and respecting these differences dramatically reduces confusion when dealing with the opposite sex. When you remember that men are from Mars and women are from Venus, everything can be explained.

AN OVERVIEW OF OUR DIFFERENCES

Throughout this book I will discuss in great detail our differences. Each chapter will bring you new and crucial insights. Here are the major differences that we will explore:

In chapter 2 we will explore how men's and women's values are inherently different and try to understand the two biggest mistakes we make in relating to the opposite sex: men mistakenly offer solutions and invalidate feelings while women offer unsolicited advice and direction. Through understanding our Martian/Venusian background it becomes obvious why men and women *unknowingly* make these mistakes. By remembering these differences we can correct our mistakes and immediately respond to each other in more productive ways.

In chapter 3 we'll discover the different ways men and women cope with stress. While Martians tend to pull away and silently think about what's bothering them, Venusians feel an instinctive need to talk about what's bothering them. You will learn new strategies for getting what you want at these conflicting times.

We will explore how to motivate the opposite sex in chapter 4. Men are motivated when they feel needed while women are motivated when they feel cherished. We will discuss the three steps for improving relationships and explore how to overcome our greatest challenges: men need to overcome their resistance to giving love while women must overcome their resistance to receiving it.

In chapter 5 you'll learn how men and women commonly misunderstand each other because they speak different languages. A *Martian/Venusian Phrase Dictionary* is provided to translate commonly misunderstood expressions. You will learn how men and women speak and even stop speaking for entirely different reasons. Women will learn what to do when a man stops talking, and men will learn how to listen better without becoming frustrated.

In chapter 6 you will discover how men and women have different needs for intimacy. A man gets close but then inevitably needs to pull away. Women will learn how to support this pulling-away process so he will spring back to her like a rubber band. Women also will learn the best times for having intimate conversations with a man.

We will explore in chapter 7 how a woman's loving attitudes rise and fall rhythmically in a wave motion. Men will learn how correctly to interpret these sometimes sudden shifts of feeling. Men also will learn to recognize when they are needed the most and how to be skillfully supportive at those times without having to make sacrifices.

In chapter 8 you'll discover how men and women give the kind of love they need and not what the opposite sex needs. Men primarily need a kind of love that is trusting, accepting, and appreciative. Women primarily need a kind of love that is caring, understanding, and respectful. You will discover the six most common ways you may unknowingly be turning off your partner.

In chapter 9 we will explore how to avoid painful arguments. Men will learn that by acting as if they are always right they may invalidate a woman's feelings. Women will learn how they unknowingly send messages of disapproval instead of disagreement, thus igniting a man's defenses. The anatomy of an argument will be explored along with many practical suggestions for establishing supportive communication.

Chapter 10 will show how men and women keep score differently. Men will learn that for Venusians every gift of love scores equally with every other gift, regardless of size. Instead of focusing on one big gift men are reminded that the little expressions of love are just as important; 101 ways to score points with women are listed. Women, however, will learn to redirect their energies into ways that score big with men by giving men what they want.

In chapter 11 you'll learn ways to communicate with each other during difficult times. The different ways men and women hide feelings are discussed along with the importance of sharing feelings. The Love Letter Technique is recommended for expressing negative feelings to your partner, as a way of finding greater love and forgiveness.

You will understand why Venusians have a more difficult time asking for support in chapter 12, as well as why Martians commonly resist requests. You will learn how the phrases "could you" and "can you" turn off men and what to say instead. You will learn the secrets for encouraging a man to give more and discover in various ways the power of being brief, direct, and using the correct wording.

In chapter 13 you'll discover the four seasons of love. This realistic perspective of how love changes and grows will assist you in overcoming the inevitable obstacles that emerge in any relationship. You will learn how your past or your partner's past can affect your relationship in the present and discover other important insights for keeping the magic of love alive.

In each chapter of *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus* you will discover new secrets for creating loving and lasting relationships. Each new discovery will increase your ability to have fulfilling relationships.

GOOD INTENTIONS ARE NOT ENOUGH

Falling in love is always magical. It feels eternal, as if love will last forever. We naïvely believe that somehow we are exempt from the problems our parents had, free from the odds that love will die, assured that it is meant to be and that we are destined to live happily ever after.

But as the magic recedes and daily life takes over, it emerges that men continue to expect women to think and react like men, and women expect men to feel and behave like women. Without a clear awareness of our differences, we do not take the time to understand and respect each other. We become demanding, resentful, judgmental, and intolerant.

With the best and most loving intentions love continues to die. Somehow the problems creep in. The resentments build. Communication breaks down. Mistrust increases. Rejection and repression result. The magic of love is lost.

We ask ourselves:

How does it happen?

Why does it happen?

Why does it happen to us?

To answer these questions our greatest minds have developed brilliant and complex philosophical and psychological models. Yet still the old patterns return. Love dies. It happens to almost everyone.

Each day millions of individuals are searching for a partner to experience that special loving feeling. Each year, millions of couples join together in love and then painfully separate because they have lost that loving feeling. From those who are able to sustain love long enough to get married, only 50 percent stay married. Out of those who stay together, possibly another 50 percent are not fulfilled. They stay together out of loyalty and obligation or from the fear of starting over.

Very few people, indeed, are able to grow in love. Yet, it does happen. When men and women are able to respect and accept their differences then love has a chance to blossom.

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Through understanding the hidden differences of the opposite sex we can more successfully give and receive the love that is in our hearts. By validating and accepting our differences, creative solutions can be discovered whereby we can succeed in getting what we want. And, more important, we can learn how to best love and support the people we care about.

Love is magical, and it can last, if we remember our differences.

2

Mr. Fix-It and the Home-Improvement Committee

The most frequently expressed complaint women have about men is that men don't listen. Either a man completely ignores her when she speaks to him, or he listens for a few beats, assesses what is bothering her, and then proudly puts on his Mr. Fix-It cap and offers her a solution to make her feel better. He is confused when she doesn't appreciate this gesture of love. No matter how many times she tells him that he's not listening, he doesn't get it and keeps doing the same thing. She wants empathy, but he thinks she wants solutions.

The most frequently expressed complaint men have about women is that women are always trying to change them. When a woman loves a man she feels responsible to assist him in growing and tries to help him improve the way he does things. She forms a home-improvement committee, and he becomes her primary focus. No matter how much he resists her help, she persists—waiting for any opportunity to help him or tell him what to do. She thinks she's nurturing him, while he feels he's being controlled. Instead, he wants her acceptance.

These two problems can finally be solved by first understanding why men offer solutions and why women seek to improve. Let's pretend to go back in time, where by observing life on Mars and Venus —before the planets discovered one another or came to Earth—we can gain some insights into men and women.

LIFE ON MARS

Martians value power, competency, efficiency, and achievement. They are always doing things to prove themselves and develop their power and skills. Their sense of self is defined through their ability to achieve results. They experience fulfillment primarily through success and accomplishment.

A man's sense of self is defined through his ability to achieve results.

Everything on Mars is a reflection of these values. Even their dress is designed to reflect their skills and competence. Police officers, soldiers, businessmen, scientists, cab drivers, technicians, and chefs all wear uniforms or at least hats to reflect their competence and power.

They don't read magazines like *Psychology Today, Self*, or *People*. They are more concerned with outdoor activities, like hunting, fishing, and racing cars. They are interested in the news, weather, and sports and couldn't care less about romance novels and self-help books.

They are more interested in "objects" and "things" rather than people and feelings. Even today on Earth, while women fantasize about romance, men fantasize about powerful cars, faster computers, gadgets, gizmos, and new more powerful technology. Men are preoccupied with the "things" that can help them express power by creating results and achieving their goals.

Achieving goals is very important to a Martian because it is a way for him to prove his competence and thus feel good about himself. And for him to feel good about himself he must achieve these goals by himself. Someone else can't achieve them for him. Martians pride themselves in doing things all by themselves. Autonomy is a symbol of efficiency, power, and competence.

Understanding this Martian characteristic can help women understand why men resist so much being corrected or being told what to do. To offer a man unsolicited advice is to presume that he doesn't know what to do or that he can't do it on his own. Men are very touchy about this, because the issue of competence is so very important to them.

To offer a man unsolicited advice is to presume that he doesn't know what to do or that he can't do it on his own.

Because he is handling his problems on his own, a Martian rarely talks about his problems unless he needs expert advice. He reasons: "Why involve someone else when I can do it by myself?" He keeps his problems to himself unless he requires help from another to find a solution. Asking for help when you can do it yourself is perceived as a sign of weakness.

However, if he truly does need help, then it is a sign of wisdom to get it. In this case, he will find someone he respects and then talk about his problem. Talking about a problem on Mars is an invitation for advice. Another Martian feels honored by the opportunity. Automatically he puts on his Mr. Fix-It hat, listens for a while, and then offers some jewels of advice.

This Martian custom is one of the reasons men instinctively offer solutions when women talk about problems. When a woman innocently shares upset feelings or explores out loud the problems of her day, a man mistakenly assumes she is looking for some expert advice. He puts on his Mr. Fix-It hat and begins giving advice; this is his way of showing love and of trying to help.

He wants to help her feel better by solving her problems. He wants to be useful to her. He feels he can be valued and thus worthy of her love when his abilities are used to solve her problems.

Once he has offered a solution, however, and she continues to be upset it becomes increasingly difficult for him to listen because his solution is being rejected and he feels increasingly useless.

He has no idea that by just listening with empathy and interest he can be supportive. He does not know that on Venus talking about problems is not an invitation to offer a solution.

LIFE ON VENUS

Venusians have different values. They value love, communication, beauty, and relationships. They

spend a lot of time supporting, helping, and nurturing one another. Their sense of self is defined through their feelings and the quality of their relationships. They experience fulfillment through sharing and relating.

A woman's sense of self is defined through her feelings and the quality of her relationships.

Everything on Venus reflects these values. Rather than building highways and tall buildings, the Venusians are more concerned with living together in harmony, community, and loving cooperation. Relationships are more important than work and technology. In most ways their world is the opposite of Mars.

They do not wear uniforms like the Martians (to reveal their competence). On the contrary, they enjoy wearing a different outfit every day, according to how they are feeling. Personal expression, especially of their feelings, is very important. They may even change outfits several times a day as their mood changes.

Communication is of primary importance. To share their personal feelings is much more important than achieving goals and success. Talking and relating to one another is a source of tremendous fulfillment.

This is hard for a man to comprehend. He can come close to understanding a woman's experience of sharing and relating by comparing it to the satisfaction he feels when he wins a race, achieves a goal, or solves a problem.

Instead of being goal oriented, women are relationship oriented; they are more concerned with expressing their goodness, love, and caring. Two Martians go to lunch to discuss a project or business goal; they have a problem to solve. In addition, Martians view going to a restaurant as an efficient way to approach food: no shopping, no cooking, and no washing dishes. For Venusians, going to lunch is an opportunity to nurture a relationship, for both giving support to and receiving support from a friend. Women's restaurant talk can be very open and intimate, almost like the dialogue that occurs between therapist and patient.

On Venus, everyone studies psychology and has at least a master's degree in counseling. They are very involved in personal growth, spirituality, and everything that can nurture life, healing, and growth. Venus is covered with parks, organic gardens, shopping centers, and restaurants.

Venusians are very intuitive. They have developed this ability through centuries of anticipating the needs of others. They pride themselves in being considerate of the needs and feelings of others. A sign of great love is to offer help and assistance to another Venusian without being asked.

Because proving one's competence is not as important to a Venusian, offering help is not offensive, and needing help is not a sign of weakness. A man, however, may feel offended because when a woman offers advice he doesn't feel she trusts his ability to do it himself.

A woman has no conception of this male sensitivity because for her it is another feather in her hat if someone offers to help her. It makes her feel loved and cherished. But offering help to a man can make him feel incompetent, weak, and even unloved.

On Venus it is a sign of caring to give advice and suggestions. Venusians firmly believe that when something is working it can always work better. Their nature is to want to improve things. When they care about someone, they freely point out what can be improved and suggest how to do it. Offering advice and constructive criticism is an act of love.

Mars is very different. Martians are more solution oriented. If something is working, their motto is don't change it. Their instinct is to leave it alone if it is working. "Don't fix it unless it is broken" is a common expression.

When a woman tries to improve a man, he feels she is trying to fix him. He receives the message that he is broken. She doesn't realize her caring attempts to help him may humiliate him. She mistakenly thinks she is just helping him to grow.

GIVE UP GIVING ADVICE

Without this insight into the nature of men, it's very easy for a woman unknowingly and unintentionally to hurt and offend the man she loves most.

For example, Tom and Mary were going to a party. Tom was driving. After about twenty minutes and going around the same block a few times, it was clear to Mary that Tom was lost. She finally suggested that he call for help. Tom became very silent. They eventually arrived at the party, but the tension from that moment persisted the whole evening. Mary had no idea of why he was so upset.

From her side she was saying "I love and care about you, so I am offering you this help."

From his side, he was offended. What he heard was "I don't trust you to get us there. You are incompetent!"

Without knowing about life on Mars, Mary could not appreciate how important it was for Tom to accomplish his goal without help. Offering advice was the ultimate insult. As we have explored, Martians never offer advice unless asked. A way of honoring another Martian is *always* to assume he can solve his problem unless he is asking for help.

Mary had no idea that when Tom became lost and started circling the same block, it was a very special opportunity to love and support him. At that time he was particularly vulnerable and needed some extra love. To honor him by not offering advice would have been a gift equivalent to his buying her a beautiful bouquet of flowers or writing her a love note.

After learning about Martians and Venusians, Mary learned how to support Tom at such difficult times. The next time he was lost, instead of offering "help" she restrained herself from offering any advice, took a deep relaxing breath, and appreciated in her heart what Tom was trying to do for her. Tom greatly appreciated her warm acceptance and trust.

Generally speaking, when a woman offers unsolicited advice or tries to "help" a man, she has no idea of how critical and unloving she may sound to him. Even though her intent is loving, her suggestions do offend and hurt. His reaction may be strong, especially if he felt criticized as a child or he experienced his father being criticized by his mother.

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unsolicited advice or tries to "help" a man, she has no idea of how critical and unloving she may sound to him.

For many men, it is very important to prove that they can get to their goal, even if it is a small thing like driving to a restaurant or party. Ironically he may be more sensitive about the little things than the big. His feelings are like this: "If I can't be trusted to do a small thing like get us to a party, how can she trust me to do the bigger things?" Like their Martian ancestors, men pride themselves on being experts, especially when it comes to fixing mechanical things, getting places, or solving problems. These are the times when he needs her loving acceptance the most and not her advice or criticism.

LEARNING TO LISTEN

Likewise, if a man does not understand how a woman is different, he can make things worse when he is trying to help. Men need to remember that women talk about problems to get close and not necessarily to get solutions.

So many times a woman just wants to share her feelings about her day, and her husband, thinking he is helping, interrupts her by offering a steady flow of solutions to her problems. He has no idea why she isn't pleased.

Many times a woman just wants to share her feelings about her day, and her husband, thinking he is helping, interrupts her by offering a steady flow of solutions to her problems.

For example, Mary comes home from an exhausting day. She wants and needs to share her feelings about the day.

She says, "There is so much to do; I don't have any time for myself."

Tom says, "You should quit that job. You don't have to work so hard. Find something you like to do."

Mary says, "But I like my job. They just expect me to change everything at a moment's notice."

Tom says, "Don't listen to them. Just do what you can do."

Mary says, "I *am!* I can't believe I completely forgot to call my aunt today."

Tom says, "Don't worry about it, she'll understand."

Mary says, "Do you know what she is going through? She needs me."

Tom says, “You worry too much, that’s why you’re so unhappy.”

Mary angrily says, “I am not always unhappy. Can’t you just listen to me?”

Tom says, “I *am* listening.”

Mary says, “Why do I even bother?”

After this conversation, Mary was more frustrated than when she arrived home seeking intimacy and companionship. Tom was also frustrated and had no idea what went wrong. He wanted to help, but his problem-solving tactics didn’t work.

Without knowing about life on Venus, Tom didn’t understand how important it was just to listen without offering solutions. His solutions only made things worse. You see, Venusians never offer solutions when someone is talking. A way of honoring another Venusian is to listen patiently with empathy, seeking truly to understand the other’s feelings.

Tom had no idea that just listening with empathy to Mary express her feelings would bring her tremendous relief and fulfillment. When Tom heard about the Venusians and how much they needed to talk, he gradually learned how to listen.

When Mary now comes home tired and exhausted their conversations are quite different. They sound like this:

Mary says, “There is so much to do. I have no time for me.”

Tom takes a deep breath, relaxes on the exhale, and says, “Humph, sounds like you had a hard day.”

Mary says, “They expect me to change everything at a moment’s notice. I don’t know what to do.”

Tom pauses and then says, “Hmmm.”

Mary says, “I even forgot to call my aunt.”

Tom says with a slightly wrinkled brow, “Oh, no.”

Mary says, “She needs me so much right now. I feel so bad.”

Tom says, “You are such a loving person. Come here, let me give you a hug.”

Tom gives Mary a hug and she relaxes in his arms with a big sigh of relief. She then says, “I love talking with you. You make me really happy. Thanks for listening. I feel much better.”

Not only Mary but also Tom felt better. He was amazed at how much happier his wife was when he finally learned to listen. With this new awareness of their differences, Tom learned the wisdom of listening without offering solutions while Mary learned the wisdom of letting go and accepting without offering unsolicited advice or criticism.

To summarize the two most common mistakes we make in relationships:

1. A man tries to change a woman’s feelings when she is upset by becoming Mr. Fix-It and offering solutions to her problems that invalidate her feelings.

2. A woman tries to change a man’s behavior when he makes mistakes by becoming the home-improvement committee and offering unsolicited advice or criticism.

IN DEFENSE OF MR. FIX-IT AND THE HOME-IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE

In pointing out these two major mistakes I do not mean that everything is wrong with Mr. Fix-It or the home-improvement committee. These are very positive Martian and Venusian attributes. The mistakes are only in timing and approach.

A woman greatly appreciates Mr. Fix-It, as long as he doesn't come out when she is upset. Men need to remember that when women seem upset and talk about problems is not the time to offer solutions; instead she needs to be heard, and gradually she will feel better on her own. She does not need to be fixed.

A man greatly appreciates the home-improvement committee, as long as it is requested. Women need to remember that unsolicited advice or criticism—especially if he has made a mistake—makes him feel unloved and controlled. He needs her acceptance more than her advice, in order to learn from his mistakes. When a man feels that a woman is not trying to improve him, he is much more likely to ask for her feedback and advice.

When our partner resists us it is probably because we have made a mistake in our timing or approach.

Understanding these differences makes it easier to respect our partner's sensitivities and be more supportive. In addition we recognize that when our partner resists us it is probably because we have made a mistake in our timing or approach. Let's explore this in greater detail.

WHEN A WOMAN RESISTS A MAN'S SOLUTIONS

When a woman resists a man's solutions he feels his competence is being questioned. As a result he feels mistrusted, unappreciated, and stops caring. His willingness to listen understandably lessens.

By remembering that women are from Venus, a man at such times can instead understand why she is resisting him. He can reflect and discover how he was probably offering solutions at a time when she was needing empathy and nurturing.

Here are some brief examples of ways a man might mistakenly invalidate feelings and perceptions or offer unwanted solutions. See if you can recognize why she would resist.

1. "You shouldn't worry so much."
2. "But that is not what I said."
3. "It's not such a big deal."
4. "OK, I'm sorry. Now can we just forget it."
5. "Why don't you just do it?"
6. "But we do talk."
7. "You shouldn't feel hurt, that's not what I meant."
8. "So what are you trying to say?"

9. “But you shouldn’t feel that way.”
10. “How can you say that? Last week I spent the whole day with you. We had a great time.”
11. “OK, then just forget it.”
12. “All right, I’ll clean up the backyard. Does that make you happy?”
13. “I got it. This is what you should do.”
14. “Look, there’s nothing we can do about it.”
15. “If you are going to complain about doing it, then don’t do it.”
16. “Why do you let people treat you that way? Forget them.”
17. “If you’re not happy then we should just get a divorce.”
18. “All right, then you can do it from now on.”
19. “From now on, I will handle it.”
20. “Of course I care about you. That’s ridiculous.”
21. “Would you get to the point?”
22. “All we have to do is …”
23. “That’s not at all what happened.”

Each of these statements either invalidates or attempts to explain upset feelings or offers a solution designed suddenly to change her negative feelings to positive feelings. The first step a man can take to change this pattern is simply to stop making the above comments (we explore this topic more fully in chapter 5). To practice listening without offering any invalidating comments or solutions is, however, a big step.

By clearly understanding that his timing and delivery are being rejected and not his solutions, a man can handle a woman’s resistance much better. He doesn’t take it so personally. By learning to listen, gradually he will experience that she will appreciate him more even when at first she is upset with him.

WHEN A MAN RESISTS THE HOME-IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE

When a man resists a woman’s suggestions she feels as though he doesn’t care; she feels her needs are not being respected. As a result she understandably feels unsupported and stops trusting him.

At such times, by remembering that men are from Mars, she can instead correctly understand why he is resisting her. She can reflect and discover how she was probably giving him unsolicited advice or criticism rather than simply sharing her needs, providing information, or making a request.

Here are some brief examples of ways a woman might unknowingly annoy a man by offering advice or seemingly harmless criticism. As you explore this list, remember that these little things can add up to create big walls of resistance and resentment. In some of the statements the advice or criticism is hidden. See if you can recognize why he might feel controlled.

1. “How can you think of buying that? You already have one.”
2. “Those dishes are still wet. They’ll dry with spots”
3. “Your hair is getting kind of long, isn’t it?”
4. “There’s a parking spot over there, turn [the car] around.”
5. “You want to spend time with your friends, what about me?”

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6. “You shouldn’t work so hard. Take a day off.”
7. “Don’t put that there. It will get lost.”
8. “You should call a plumber. He’ll know what to do.”
9. “Why are we waiting for a table? Didn’t you make reservations?”
10. “You should spend more time with the kids. They miss you.”
11. “Your office is still a mess. How can you think in here? When are you going to clean it up?”
12. “You forgot to bring it home again. Maybe you could put it in a special place where you can remember it.”
13. “You’re driving too fast. Slow down or you’ll get a ticket.”
14. “Next time we should read the movie reviews.”
15. “I didn’t know where you were.” (You should have called.)
16. “Somebody drank from the juice bottle.”
17. “Don’t eat with your fingers. You’re setting a bad example.”
18. “Those potato chips are too greasy. They’re not good for your heart.”
19. “You are not leaving yourself enough time.”
20. “You should give me more [advance] notice. I can’t just drop everything and go to lunch with you.”
21. “Your shirt doesn’t match your pants.”
22. “Bill called for the third time. When are you going to call him back?”
23. “Your toolbox is such a mess. I can’t find anything. You should organize it.”

When a woman does not know how to directly ask a man for support (chapter 12) or constructively share a difference of opinion (chapter 9), she may feel powerless to get what she needs without giving unsolicited advice or criticism (again, we explore this topic more fully later on). To practice giving acceptance and not giving advice and criticism is, however, a big step.

By clearly understanding he is rejecting not her needs but the way she is approaching him, she can take his rejection less personally and explore more supportive ways of communicating her needs. Gradually she will realize that a man wants to make improvements when he feels he is being approached as the solution to a problem rather than as the problem itself.

A man wants to make improvements when he feels he is being approached as the solution to a problem rather than as the problem itself.

If you are a woman, I suggest that for the next week practice restraining from giving *any* unsolicited advice or criticism. The men in your life not only will appreciate it but also will be more attentive and responsive to you.

If you are a man, I suggest that for the next week you practice listening *whenever* a woman speaks, with the sole intention of respectfully understanding what she is going through. Practice biting your tongue whenever you get the urge to offer a solution or change how she is feeling. You will be surprised when you experience how much she appreciates you.

3

Men Go to Their Caves and Women Talk

One of the biggest differences between men and women is how they cope with stress. Men become increasingly focused and withdrawn while women become increasingly overwhelmed and emotionally involved. At these times, a man's needs for feeling good are different from a woman's. He feels better by solving problems while she feels better by talking about problems. Not understanding and accepting these differences creates unnecessary friction in our relationships. Let's look at a common example.

> When Tom comes home, he wants to relax and unwind by quietly reading the news. He is stressed by the unsolved problems of his day and finds relief through forgetting them.
>
> His wife, Mary, also wants to relax from her stressful day. She, however, wants to find relief by talking about the problems of her day. The tension slowly building between them gradually becomes resentment.
>
> Tom secretly thinks Mary talks too much, while Mary feels ignored. Without understanding their differences they will grow further apart.

You probably can recognize this situation because it is just one of many examples where men and women are at odds. This problem is not just Tom and Mary's but is present in almost every relationship.

Solving this problem for Tom and Mary depends not on how much they loved each other but on how much they understood the opposite sex.

Without knowing that women really do need to talk about problems to feel better, Tom would continue to think Mary talked too much and resist listening to her. Without knowing that Tom was reading the news to feel better, Mary would feel ignored and neglected. She would persist in trying to get him to talk when he didn't want to.

These two differences can be resolved by first understanding in greater detail how men and women cope with stress. Let's again observe life on Mars and Venus and glean some insights about men and women.

COPING WITH STRESS ON MARS AND VENUS

When a Martian gets upset he never talks about what is bothering him. He would never burden another Martian with his problem unless his friend's assistance was necessary to solve the problem. Instead he becomes very quiet and goes to his private cave to think about his problem, mulling it over to find a solution. When he has found a solution, he feels much better and comes out of his cave.

If he can't find a solution then he does something to forget his problems, like reading the news or

playing a game. By disengaging his mind from the problems of his day, gradually he can relax. If his stress is really great it takes getting involved with something even more challenging, like racing his car, competing in a contest, or climbing a mountain.

To feel better Martians go to their caves to solve problems alone.

When a Venusian becomes upset or is stressed by her day, to find relief, she seeks out someone she trusts and then talks in great detail about the problems of her day. When Venusians share feelings of being overwhelmed, they suddenly feel better. This is the Venusian way.

To feel better Venusians get together and openly talk about their problems.

On Venus sharing your problems with another actually is considered a sign of love and trust and not a burden. Venusians are not ashamed of having problems. Their egos are dependent not on looking "competent" but rather on being in loving relationships. They openly share feelings of being overwhelmed, confused, hopeless, and exhausted.

A Venusian feels good about herself when she has loving friends with whom to share her feelings and problems. A Martian feels good when he can solve his problems on his own in his cave. These secrets of feeling good are still applicable today.

FINDING RELIEF IN THE CAVE

When a man is stressed he will withdraw into the cave of his mind and focus on solving a problem. He generally picks the most urgent problem or the most difficult. He becomes so focused on solving this one problem that he temporarily loses awareness of everything else. Other problems and responsibilities fade into the background.

At such times, he becomes increasingly distant, forgetful, unresponsive, and preoccupied in his relationships. For example, when having a conversation with him at home, it seems as if only 5 percent of his mind is available for the relationship while the other 95 percent is still at work.

His full awareness is not present because he is mulling over his problem, hoping to find a solution. The more stressed he is the more gripped by the problem he will be. At such times he is incapable of giving a woman the attention and feeling that she normally receives and certainly deserves. His mind is preoccupied, and he is powerless to release it. If, however, he can find a solution, instantly he will feel much better and come out of his cave; suddenly he is available for being in a relationship again.

However, if he cannot find a solution to his problem, then he remains stuck in the cave. To get

unstuck he is drawn to solving little problems, like reading the news, watching TV, driving his car, doing physical exercise, watching a football game, playing basketball, and so forth. Any challenging activity that initially requires only 5 percent of his mind can assist him in forgetting his problems and becoming unstuck. Then the next day he can redirect his focus to his problem with greater success.

Let's explore in greater detail a few examples. Jim commonly uses reading the newspaper to forget his problems. When he reads the paper he is no longer being confronted with the problems of his day. With the 5 percent of his mind that is not focused on his work problems, he begins forming opinions and finding solutions for the world's problems. Gradually his mind becomes increasingly involved with the problems in the news and he forgets his own. In this way he makes the transition from being focused on his problems at work to focusing on the many problems of the world (for which he is not directly responsible). This process releases his mind from the gripping problems of work so he can focus on his wife and family again.

Tom watches a football game to release his stress and unwind. He releases his mind from trying to solve his own problems by solving the problems of his favorite team. Through watching sports he can vicariously feel he has solved a problem with each play. When his team scores points or wins, he enjoys the feeling of success. If his team loses, he suffers their loss as his own. In either case, however, his mind is released from the grip of his real problems.

For Tom and many men the inevitable release of tension that occurs at the completion of any sporting event, news event, or movie provides a release from the tension he feels in his life.

How Women React to the Cave

When a man is stuck in his cave, he is powerless to give his partner the quality attention she deserves. It is hard for her to be accepting of him at these times because she doesn't know how stressed he is. If he were to come home and talk about all his problems, then she could be more compassionate. Instead he doesn't talk about his problems, and she feels he is ignoring her. She can tell he is upset but mistakenly assumes he doesn't care about her because he isn't talking to her.

Women generally do not understand how Martians cope with stress. They expect men to open up and talk about all their problems the way Venusians do. When a man is stuck in his cave, a woman resents his not being more open. She feels hurt when he turns on the news or goes outside to play some basketball and ignores her.

To expect a man who is in his cave instantly to become open, responsive, and loving is as unrealistic as expecting a woman who is upset immediately to calm down and make complete sense. It is a mistake to expect a man to always be in touch with his loving feelings just as it is a mistake to expect a woman's feelings to always be rational and logical.

When Martians go to their caves they tend to forget that their friends may be having problems too. An instinct takes over that says before you can take care of anybody else, you must first take care of yourself. When a woman sees a man react in this way, she generally resists it and resents the man.

She may ask for his support in a demanding tone, as if she has to fight for her rights with this uncaring man. By remembering that men are from Mars, a woman can correctly interpret his reaction to stress as his coping mechanism rather than as an expression of how he feels about her. She can begin to cooperate with him to get what she needs instead of resisting him.

On the other side, men generally have little awareness of how distant they become when they are in

the cave. As a man recognizes how withdrawing into his cave may affect women, he can be compassionate when she feels neglected and unimportant. Remembering that women are from Venus helps him to be more understanding and respectful of her reactions and feelings. Without understanding the validity of her reactions, a man commonly defends himself, and they argue. These are five common misunderstandings:

1. When she says "You don't listen," he says "What do you mean I don't listen. I can tell you everything you said."

When a man is in the cave he can record what she is saying with the 5 percent of his mind that is listening. A man reasons that if he is listening with 5 percent, then he is listening. However, what she is asking for is his full undivided attention.

2. When she says "I feel like you are not even here," he says "What do you mean I'm not here? Of course I am here. Don't you see my body?"

He reasons that if his body is present then she shouldn't say he is not there. However, though his body is present, she doesn't feel his full presence, and that is what she means.

3. When she says "You don't care about me," he says "Of course I care about you. Why do you think I am trying to solve this problem?"

He reasons that because he is preoccupied with solving a problem that will in some way benefit her, she should know he cares for her. However, she needs to feel his direct attention and caring, and that is what she is really asking for.

4. When she says "I feel like I am not important to you," he says "That's ridiculous. Of course you are important."

He reasons that her feelings are invalid because he is solving problems to benefit her. He doesn't realize that when he focuses on one problem and ignores the problems she is bothered by that almost any woman would have the same reaction and take it personally and feel unimportant.

5. When she says "You have no feelings. You are in your head," he says "What's wrong with that? How else do you expect me to solve this problem?"

He reasons that she is being too critical and demanding because he is doing something that is essential for him to solve problems. He feels unappreciated. In addition he doesn't recognize the validity of her feelings. Men generally don't realize how extremely and quickly they may shift from being warm and feeling to being unresponsive and distant. In his cave a man is preoccupied with solving his problem and is unaware of how his indifferent attitude might feel to others.

To increase cooperation both men and women need to understand each other better. When a man begins to ignore his wife, she often takes it personally. Knowing that he is coping with stress in his own way is extremely helpful but does not always help her alleviate the pain.

At such times she may feel the need to talk about these feelings. This is when it is important for the man to validate her feelings. He needs to understand that she has a right to talk about her feelings of being ignored and unsupported just as he has a right to withdraw into his cave and not talk. If she does not feel understood then it is difficult for her to release her hurt.

FINDING RELIEF THROUGH TALKING

When a woman is stressed she instinctively feels a need to talk about her feelings and all the possible problems that are associated with her feelings. When she begins talking she does not prioritize the significance of any problem. If she is upset, then she is upset about it all, big and small. She is not immediately concerned with finding solutions to her problems but rather seeks relief by expressing herself and being understood. By randomly talking about her problems, she becomes less upset.

A woman under stress is not immediately concerned with finding solutions to her problems but rather seeks relief by expressing herself and being understood.

As a man under stress tends to focus on one problem and forget others, a woman under stress tends to expand and become overwhelmed by all problems. By talking about all possible problems without focusing on problem solving she feels better. Through exploring her feelings in this process she gains a greater awareness of what is really bothering her, and then suddenly she is no longer so overwhelmed.

To feel better, women talk about past problems, future problems, potential problems, even problems that have no solutions. The more talk and exploration, the better they feel. This is the way women operate. To expect otherwise is to deny a woman her sense of self.

When a woman is overwhelmed she finds relief through talking in great detail about her various problems. Gradually, if she feels she is being heard, her stress disappears. After talking about one topic she will pause and then move on to the next. In this way she continues to expand talking about problems, worries, disappointments, and frustrations. These topics need not be in any order and tend to be logically unrelated. If she feels she is not being understood, her awareness may expand even further, and she may become upset about more problems.

Just as a man who is stuck in the cave needs little problems to distract him, a woman who doesn't feel heard will need to talk about other problems that are less immediate to feel relief. To forget her own painful feelings she may become emotionally involved in the problems of others. In addition she may find relief through discussing the problems of her friends, relatives, and associates. Whether she is talking about her problems or others' problems, talking is a natural and healthy Venusian reaction to stress.

To forget her own painful feelings a woman may become emotionally involved in the problems of others.

How Men React When Women Need to Talk

When women talk about problems, men usually resist. A man assumes she is talking with him about her problems because she is holding him responsible. The more problems, the more he feels blamed. He does not realize that she is talking to feel better. A man doesn't know that she will appreciate it if he just listens.

Martians talk about problems for only two reasons: they are blaming someone or they are seeking advice. If a woman is really upset a man assumes she is blaming him. If she seems less upset, then he assumes she is asking for advice.

If he assumes she is asking for advice, then he puts on his Mr. Fix-It hat to solve her problems. If he assumes she is blaming him, then he draws his sword to protect himself from attack. In both cases, he soon finds it difficult to listen.

If he offers solutions to her problems, she just continues talking about more problems. After offering two or three solutions, he expects her to feel better. This is because Martians themselves feel better with solutions, as long as they have asked for a solution to be offered. When she doesn't feel better, he feels his solutions have been rejected, and he feels unappreciated.

On the other hand, if he feels attacked, then he begins to defend himself. He thinks if he explains himself that she will stop blaming him. The more he defends himself, however, the more upset she becomes. He doesn't realize that explanations are not what she needs. She needs him to understand her feelings and let her move on to talk about more problems. If he is wise and just listens, then a few moments after she is complaining about him, she will change the subject and talk about other problems as well.

Men also become particularly frustrated when a woman talks about problems that he can do nothing about. For example, when a woman is stressed she could complain:

- "I'm not getting paid enough at work."
- "My Aunt Louise is getting sicker and sicker, each year she gets sicker."
- "Our house just isn't big enough."
- "This is such a dry season. When is it going to rain?"
- "We are almost overdrawn in our bank account."

A woman might make any of the above comments as a way of expressing her worries, disappointments, and frustrations. She may know that nothing more can be done to solve these problems, but to find relief she still needs to talk about them. She feels supported if the listener relates to her frustration and disappointment. She may, however, frustrate her male partner—unless he understands that she just needs to talk about it and then she will feel better.

Men also become impatient when women talk about problems in great detail. A man mistakenly assumes that when a woman talks in great detail that all the details are necessary for him to find a solution to her problem. He struggles to find their relevance and becomes impatient. Again he doesn't realize that she is looking not for a solution from him but for his caring and understanding.

In addition, listening is difficult for a man because he mistakenly assumes there is a logical order when she randomly changes from one problem to another. After she has shared three or four problems he becomes extremely frustrated and confused trying logically to relate these problems.

Another reason a man may resist listening is that he is looking for the bottom line. He cannot begin formulating his solution until he knows the outcome. The more details she gives the more he is frustrated while listening. His frustration is lessened if he can remember that she is greatly benefiting by talking about the details. If he can remember that talking in detail is helping her to feel good, then he can relax. Just as a man is fulfilled through working out the intricate details of solving a problem, a woman is fulfilled through talking about the details of her problems.

Just as a man is fulfilled through working out the intricate details of solving a problem, a woman is fulfilled through talking about the details of her problems.

Something a woman can do to make it a little easier for a man is to let him know in advance the outcome of the story and then go back and give the details. Avoid keeping him in suspense. Women commonly enjoy letting the suspense build because it brings more feeling into the story. Another woman appreciates this buildup, but a man can be easily frustrated.

The degree to which a man does not understand a woman is the degree to which he will resist her when she is talking about problems. As a man learns more how to fulfill a woman and provide her emotional support he discovers that listening is not so difficult. More important, if a woman can remind a man that she just wants to talk about her problems and that he doesn't have to solve any of them, it can help him to relax and listen.

HOW THE MARTIANS AND VENUSIANS FOUND PEACE

The Martians and Venusians lived together in peace because they were able to respect their differences. The Martians learned to respect that Venusians needed to talk to feel better. Even if he didn't have much to say, he learned that by listening he could be very supportive. The Venusians learned to respect that Martians needed to withdraw to cope with stress. The cave was no longer a great mystery or cause for alarm.

What the Martians Learned

The Martians realized that even when they felt they were being attacked, blamed, or criticized by the Venusians it was only temporary; soon the Venusians would suddenly feel better and be very appreciative and accepting. By learning to listen, the Martians discovered how much the Venusians really thrived on talking about problems.

Each Martian found peace of mind when he finally understood that a Venusian's need to talk about her problems was not because he was failing her in some way. In addition he learned that once a Venusian feels heard she stops dwelling on her problems and becomes very positive. With this

awareness, a Martian was able to listen without feeling responsible for solving all her problems.

Many men and even women are very judgmental of the need to talk about problems because they have never experienced how healing it can be. They have not seen how a woman who feels heard suddenly can change, feel better, and sustain a positive attitude. Generally they have seen how a woman (probably their mother) who did not feel heard continued to dwell on her problems. This happens to women when they do not feel loved or heard over an extended period of time. The real problem, however, is that she feels unloved, not that she is talking about problems.

After the Martians learned how to listen they made a most amazing discovery. They began to realize that listening to a Venusian talk about problems could actually help them come out of their caves in the same way as watching the news on TV or reading a newspaper.

Similarly, as men learn to listen without feeling blamed or responsible, listening becomes much easier. As a man gets good at listening, he realizes that listening can be an excellent way to forget the problems of his day as well as bring a lot of fulfillment to his partner. But on days when he is really stressed he may need to be in his cave and slowly come out by some other distraction, like the news or a competitive sport.

What the Venusians Learned

The Venusians also found peace of mind when they finally understood that a Martian going into his cave was not a sign that he didn't love her as much. They learned to be more accepting of him at these times because he was experiencing a lot of stress.

The Venusians were not offended when Martians were easily distracted. When a Venusian talked and a Martian became distracted, she would very politely stop talking, stand there, and wait for him to notice. Then she would begin talking again. She understood that sometimes it was hard for him to give his full attention. The Venusians discovered that by asking for the Martians' attention in a relaxed and accepting manner the Martians were happy to redirect their attention.

When the Martians were completely preoccupied and in their caves, the Venusians also did not take it personally. They learned that this was not the time to have intimate conversations but a time to talk about problems with their friends or have fun and go shopping. When the Martians thereby felt loved and accepted, the Venusians discovered that the Martians would more quickly come out of their caves.

4

How to Motivate the Opposite Sex

Centuries before the Martians and Venusians got together they had been quite happy living in their separate worlds. Then one day everything changed. The Martians and Venusians on their respective planets suddenly became depressed. It was this depression, however, that motivated them eventually to come together.

Understanding the secrets of their transformation helps us today to recognize how men and women are motivated in different ways. With this new awareness you will be better equipped to support your partner as well as get the support you need at difficult and stressful times. Let's go back in time and pretend to witness what happened.

When the Martians became depressed, everyone on the planet left the cities and went to their caves for a long time. They were stuck and couldn't come out, until one day when a Martian happened to glimpse the beautiful Venusians through his telescope. As he quickly shared his telescope, the sight of these beautiful beings inspired the Martians, and their depression miraculously lifted. *Suddenly they felt needed.* They came out of their caves and began building a fleet of spaceships to fly to Venus.

When the Venusians became depressed, to feel better they formed circles and began talking with one another about their problems. But this didn't seem to relieve the depression. They stayed depressed for a long time until through their intuition they experienced a vision. Strong and wondrous beings (the Martians) would be coming across the universe to love, serve, and support them. *Suddenly they felt cherished.* As they shared their vision their depression lifted, and they happily began preparing for the arrival of the Martians.

Men are motivated and empowered *when they feel needed*…. Women are motivated and empowered *when they feel cherished.*

These secrets of motivation are still applicable. Men are motivated and empowered *when they feel needed.* When a man does not feel needed in a relationship, he gradually becomes passive and less energized; with each passing day he has less to give the relationship. On the other hand, when he feels trusted to do his best to fulfill her needs and appreciated for his efforts, he is empowered and has more to give.

Like the Venusians, women are motivated and empowered *when they feel cherished.* When a woman does not feel cherished in a relationship she gradually becomes compulsively responsible and exhausted from giving too much. On the other hand when she feels cared for and respected, she is fulfilled and has more to give as well.

WHEN A MAN LOVES A WOMAN

A man falling in love with a woman is similar to what took place when the first Martian discovered the Venusians. Stuck in his cave and unable to find the source of his depression, he was searching the sky with his telescope. As if he had been struck by lightning, in one glorious moment his life was permanently changed. He had glimpsed through his telescope a vision he described as awesome beauty and grace.

He had discovered the Venusians. His body lit on fire. As he watched the Venusians, for the first time in his life he began to care about someone other than himself. From just one glimpse his life had new meaning. His depression lifted.

Martians have a win/lose philosophy—I want to win, and I don't care if you lose. As long as each Martian took care of himself this formula worked fine. It worked for centuries, but now it needed to be changed. Giving primarily to themselves was no longer as satisfying. Being in love, they wanted the Venusians to win as much as themselves.

In most sports today we can see an extension of this Martian competitive code. For example, in tennis I not only want to win but also try to make my friend lose by making it difficult for him to return my shots. I enjoy winning even though my friend loses.

Most of these Martian attitudes have a place in life, but this win/lose attitude becomes harmful in our adult relationships. If I seek to fulfill my own needs at the expense of my partner, we are sure to experience unhappiness, resentment, and conflict. The secret of forming a successful relationship is for both partners to win.

Differences Attract

After the first Martian fell in love, he began manufacturing telescopes for all his brother Martians. Very quickly they all came out of their depressions. They too began to feel love for the Venusians. They started to care about the Venusians as much as themselves.

The strange and beautiful Venusians were a mysterious attraction to the Martians. Their differences especially attracted the Martians. Where the Martians were hard, the Venusians were soft. Where the Martians were angular, the Venusians were round. Where the Martians were cool, the Venusians were warm. In a magical and perfect way their differences seemed to complement each other.

In an unspoken language the Venusians communicated loud and clear: "We need you. Your power and strength can bring us great fulfillment, filling a void deep within our being. Together we could live in great happiness." This invitation motivated and empowered the Martians.

Many women instinctively understand how to give this message. In the beginning of a relationship, a woman gives a man a brief look that says you could be the one to make me happy. In this subtle way she actually initiates their relationship. This look encourages him to come closer. It empowers him to overcome his fears of having a relationship. Unfortunately, once they are in a relationship and as the problems begin to emerge, she doesn't know how important that message still is to him and neglects to send it.

The Martians were very motivated by the possibility of making a difference on Venus. The Martian

race was moving to a new level of evolution. They were no longer satisfied by just proving themselves and developing their power. They wanted to use their power and skills in the service of others, especially in the service of the Venusians. They were beginning to develop a new philosophy, a win/win philosophy. They wanted a world where everyone cared for themselves as well as for others.

Love Motivates Martians

The Martians began building a fleet of spaceships that would carry them across the heavens to Venus. They had never felt so alive. Through glimpsing the Venusians, they were beginning to have unselfish feelings for the first time in their history.

Similarly, when a man is in love he is motivated to be the best he can be in order to serve others. When his heart is open, he feels so confident in himself that he is capable of making major changes. Given the opportunity to prove his potential, he expresses his best self. Only when he feels he cannot succeed does he regress back to his old selfish ways.

When a man is in love, he begins to care about another as much as himself. He is suddenly released from the binding chains of being motivated for himself alone and becomes free to give to another, not for personal gain, but out of caring. He experiences his partner's fulfillment as if it were his own. He can easily endure any hardship to make her happy because her happiness makes him happy. His struggles become easier. He is energized with a higher purpose.

Given the opportunity to prove his potential, a man expresses his best self. Only when he feels he cannot succeed does he regress back to his old selfish ways.

In his youth he can be satisfied by serving himself alone, but as he matures self-gratification is no longer as satisfying. To experience fulfillment he must begin to live his life motivated by love. Being inspired to give in such a free and selfless way liberates him from the inertia of self-gratification devoid of caring for others. Although he still needs to receive love, his greatest need is to give love.

Most men are not only hungry to give love but are starving for it. Their biggest problem is that they do not know what they are missing. They rarely saw their fathers succeed in fulfilling their mothers through giving. As a result they do not know that a major source of fulfillment for a man can come through giving. When his relationships fail he finds himself depressed and stuck in his cave. He stops caring and doesn't know why he is so depressed.

At such times he withdraws from relationships or intimacy and remains stuck in his cave. He asks himself what it is all for, and why he should bother. He doesn't know that he has stopped caring because he doesn't feel needed. He does not realize that by finding someone who needs him, he can shake off his depression and be motivated again.

Not to be needed is a slow death for a man.

When a man doesn't feel he is making a positive difference in someone else's life, it is hard for him to continue caring about his life and relationships. It is difficult to be motivated when he is not needed. To become motivated again he needs to feel appreciated, trusted, and accepted. Not to be needed is a slow death for a man.

WHEN A WOMAN LOVES A MAN

A woman falling in love with a man is similar to what took place when the first Venusian believed that the Martians were coming. She dreamed that a fleet of spaceships from the heavens would land and a race of strong and caring Martians would emerge. These beings would not need nurturing but instead wanted to provide for and take care of the Venusians.

These Martians were very devoted and were inspired by the Venusian beauty and culture. The Martians recognized that their power and competence were meaningless without someone to serve. These wondrous and admirable beings had found relief and inspiration in the promise of serving, pleasing, and fulfilling the Venusians. What a miracle!

Other Venusians had similar dreams and instantly came out of their depressions. The realization that transformed the Venusians was the belief that help was on the way because the Martians were coming. The Venusians had been depressed because they felt isolated and alone. To come out of depression they needed to feel that loving help was on the way.

Most men have little awareness of how important it is to a woman to feel supported by someone who cares. Women are happy when they believe their needs will be met. When a woman is upset, overwhelmed, confused, exhausted, or hopeless what she needs most is simple companionship. She needs to feel she is not alone. She needs to feel loved and cherished.

Empathy, understanding, validation, and compassion go a long way to assist her in becoming more receptive and appreciative of his support. Men don't realize this because their Martian instincts tell them it's best to be alone when they are upset. When she is upset, out of respect he will leave her alone, or if he stays he makes matters worse by trying to solve her problems. He does not instinctively realize how very important closeness, intimacy, and sharing are to her. What she needs most is just someone to listen.

Through sharing her feelings she begins to remember that she is worthy of love and that her needs will be fulfilled. Doubt and mistrust melt away. Her tendency to be compulsive relaxes as she remembers that she is worthy of love—she doesn't have to earn it; she can relax, give less, and receive more. She deserves it.

A **woman's tendency to be compulsive relaxes as she remembers that she is worthy of love—**

she doesn't have to earn it; she can relax, give less, and receive more. She deserves it.

Too Much Giving Is Tiring

To deal with their depression the Venusians were busy sharing their feelings and talking about their problems. As they talked they discovered the cause of their depression. They were tired of giving so much all the time. They resented always feeling responsible for one another. They wanted to relax and just be taken care of for a while. They were tired of sharing everything with others. They wanted to be special and possess things that were their own. No longer were they satisfied being martyrs and living for others.

On Venus, they lived by a lose/win philosophy—"I lose so that you can win." As long as everyone made sacrifices for others, then everyone was taken care of. But after doing this for centuries the Venusians were tired of always caring about one another and sharing everything. They also were ready for a win/win philosophy.

Similarly, many women today are also tired of giving. They want time off. Time to explore being themselves. Time to care about themselves first. They want someone to provide emotional support, someone they don't have to take care of. The Martians fit the bill perfectly.

At this point the Martians were learning to give while the Venusians were now ready to learn how to receive. After centuries the Venusians and Martians had reached an important stage in their evolution. The Venusians needed to learn how to receive while the Martians needed to learn how to give.

This same change commonly takes place in men and women as they mature. In her younger years, a woman is much more willing to sacrifice and mold herself to fulfill her partner's needs. In a man's younger years, he is much more self-absorbed and unaware of the needs of others. As a woman matures she realizes how she may have been giving up herself in order to please her partner. As a man matures he realizes how he can better serve and respect others.

As a man matures he also learns that he may be giving up himself, but his major change is becoming more aware of how he can succeed in giving. Likewise, as a woman matures she also learns new strategies for giving, but her major change tends to be learning to set limits in order to receive what she wants.

Giving Up Blame

When a woman realizes she has been giving too much, she tends to blame her partner for their unhappiness. She feels the injustice of giving more than she has received.

Although she has not received what she deserved, to improve her relationships she needs to recognize how she contributed to the problem. When a woman gives too much she should not blame her partner. Similarly, a man who gives less should not blame his partner for being negative or unreceptive to him. In both cases, blaming does not work.

Understanding, trust, compassion, acceptance, and support are the solution, not blaming our partners. When this situation occurs, instead of blaming his female partner for being resentful, a man can be compassionate and offer his support even if she doesn't ask for it, listen to her even if at first it sounds like blame, and help her to trust and open up to him by doing little things for her to show that he cares.

Instead of blaming a man for giving less, a woman can accept and forgive her partner's imperfections, especially when he disappoints her, trust that he wants to give more when he doesn't offer his support, and encourage him to give more by appreciating what he does give and continuing to ask for his support.

SETTING AND RESPECTING LIMITS

Most important, however, a woman needs to recognize her boundaries of what she can give without resenting her partner. Instead of expecting her partner to even the score, she needs to keep it even by regulating how much she gives.

Let's look at an example. Jim was thirty-nine and his wife, Susan, was forty-one when they came for counseling. Susan wanted a divorce. She complained that she had been giving more than he had for twelve years and could not take it any more. She blamed Jim for being lethargic, selfish, controlling, and unromantic. She said she had nothing left to give and was ready to leave. He convinced her to come to therapy, but she was doubtful. In a six-month period they were able to move through the three steps for healing a relationship. Today they are happily married with three children.

Step 1: Motivation

I explained to Jim that his wife was experiencing twelve years of accumulated resentment. If he wanted to save this marriage, he would have to do a lot of listening for her to be motivated to work on their marriage. For the first six sessions together, I encouraged Susan to share her feelings and helped Jim patiently to understand her negative feelings. This was the hardest part of their healing process. As he began to really hear her pain and unfulfilled needs, he became increasingly motivated and confident that he could make the changes necessary to have a loving relationship.

Before Susan could be motivated to work on their relationship, she needed to be heard and feel that Jim validated her feelings: this was the first step. After Susan felt understood, they were able to proceed to the next step.

Step 2: Responsibility

The second step was taking responsibility. Jim needed to take responsibility for not supporting his wife, while Susan needed to take responsibility for not setting boundaries. Jim apologized for the ways he had hurt her. Susan realized that just as he had stepped over her boundaries by treating her in disrespectful ways (such as yelling, grumbling, resisting requests, and invalidating feelings), she had not set her boundaries. Although she did not need to apologize, she did acknowledge some responsibility for their problems.

As she gradually accepted that her inability to set limits and her tendency to give more had contributed to their problems, she was able to be more forgiving. Taking responsibility for her problem was essential to releasing her resentment. In this way they both were motivated to learn new ways of supporting each other through respecting limits.

Step 3: Practice

Jim particularly needed to learn how to respect her boundaries, while Susan needed to learn how to set them. Both of them needed to learn how to express honest feelings in a respectful way. They agreed in this third step to practice setting and respecting limits, knowing that at times they would make mistakes. Being able to make mistakes gave them a safety net while they both practiced. These are some examples of what they learned and practiced:

- Susan practiced saying "I don't like the way you are talking. Please stop yelling or I will leave the room." After leaving the room a few times, she didn't need to do it anymore.
- When Jim would make requests that she would later resent doing, she practiced saying "No, I need to relax" or "No, I'm too busy today." She discovered that he was more attentive to her because he understood how busy or tired she was.
- Susan told Jim that she wanted to go on a vacation, and when he said he was too busy she said that she would go alone. Suddenly he shifted his schedule and wanted to go.
- When they talked and Jim interrupted, she practiced saying "I'm not finished, please hear me out." Suddenly he started listening more and interrupting less.
- Susan's most difficult task was to practice asking for what she wanted. She said to me, "Why should I have to ask, after all I have done for him?" I explained that making him responsible for knowing her wants was not only unrealistic but a big part of her problem. She needed to be responsible for getting her needs fulfilled.
- Jim's most difficult challenge was to be respectful of her changes and not expect her to be the same accommodating partner he originally married. He recognized that it was as difficult for her to set limits as it was for him to adjust to them. He understood that they would become graceful as they had more practice.

As a man experiences limits, he is motivated to give more. Through respecting limits, he automatically is motivated to question the effectiveness of his behavior patterns and to start making changes. When a woman realizes that in order to receive she needs to set limits, then automatically she begins to forgive her partner and explore new ways of asking for and receiving support. When a woman sets limits, she gradually learns to relax and receive more.

LEARNING TO RECEIVE

Setting limits and receiving are very scary for a woman. She is commonly afraid of needing too much and then being rejected, judged, or abandoned. Rejection, judgment, and abandonment are most painful because deep inside her unconscious she holds the incorrect belief that she is unworthy of receiving more. This belief was formed and reinforced in childhood every time she had to suppress

her feelings, needs, or wishes.

A woman is particularly vulnerable to the negative and incorrect belief that she doesn't deserve to be loved. If as a child she witnessed abuse or was directly abused, then she is even more vulnerable to feeling unworthy of love; it is harder for her to determine her worth. Hidden in the unconscious, this feeling of unworthiness generates the fear of needing others. A part of her imagines that she will not be supported.

Because she is afraid of not being supported, she unknowingly pushes away the support she needs. When a man receives the message that she doesn't trust him to fulfill her needs, then he feels immediately rejected and is turned off. Her hopelessness and mistrust transform her valid needs into desperate expressions of neediness and communicate to him the message that she doesn't trust him to support her. Ironically, men are primarily motivated by being needed, but are turned off by neediness.

At such times, a woman mistakenly assumes that having needs has turned him off when in truth it is her hopelessness, desperation, and mistrust that has done so. Without recognizing that men need to be trusted, it is difficult and confusing for women to understand the difference between needing and neediness.

"Needing" is openly reaching out and asking for support from a man in a trusting manner, one that assumes that he will do his best. This empowers him. "Neediness," however, is desperately needing support because you don't trust you will get it. It pushes men away and makes them feel rejected and unappreciated.

For women, not only is needing others confusing but being disappointed or abandoned is especially painful, even in the smallest ways. It is not easy for her to depend on others and then be ignored, forgotten, or dismissed. Needing others puts her in a vulnerable position. Being ignored or disappointed hurts more because it affirms the incorrect belief that she is unworthy.

How the Venusians Learned to Feel Worthy

For centuries the Venusians compensated for this fundamental fear of unworthiness by being attentive and responsive to the needs of others. They would give and give, but deep inside they did not feel worthy of receiving. They hoped that by giving they would become more worthy. After centuries of giving they finally realized that they were worthy of receiving love and support. Then they looked back and realized that they had always been worthy of support.

This process of giving to others prepared them for the wisdom of self-esteem. Through giving to others they came to see that others truly were worthy of receiving, and thus they began to see that everyone deserved to be loved. Then, finally, they saw that they too deserved to receive.

Here on Earth, when a little girl experiences her mother receiving love, then automatically she feels worthy. She is able easily to overcome the Venusian compulsion to give too much. She doesn't have to overcome a fear of receiving because she identifies so closely with her mother. If her mother has learned this wisdom then the child automatically learns it through observing and sharing her mother's feelings. If the mother is open to receive, then the child learns how to receive.

The Venusians, however, did not have role models, so it took them thousands of years to give up their compulsive giving. Through gradually seeing that others were worthy of receiving, they realized that they also were worthy of receiving. At that magical moment the Martians also went through a transformation and began building spaceships.

When a woman realizes that she truly deserves to be loved, she is opening the door for a man to give to her. But when it takes her ten years of overgiving in a marriage to realize that she deserves more, ironically, she feels like closing the door and not giving him the chance. She may feel something like this: "I have given to you and you have ignored me. You had your chance. I deserve better. I can't trust you. I am too tired, I have nothing left to give. I will not let you hurt me again."

Repeatedly, when this is the case, I have assured women that they don't have to give more to have a better relationship. Their partner actually will give them more if they give less. When a man has been ignoring her needs, it is as though they have both been asleep. When she wakes up and remembers her needs, he also wakes up and wants to give her more.

When she wakes up and remembers her needs, he also wakes up and wants to give her more.

Predictably, her partner will wake up from his passive state and truly make many of the changes she requires. When she is no longer giving too much, because she is feeling worthy inside herself, he comes out of his cave and starts building spaceships to come and make her happy. It may take him a while actually to learn to give her more, but the most important step is taken—he is aware that he has neglected her and he wants to change.

It also works the other way around. Usually when a man realizes that he is unhappy and wants more romance and love in his life, his wife will suddenly begin to open up and love him again. The walls of resentment begin to melt, and love comes back to life. If there has been a lot of neglect it may take a while truly to heal all the accumulated resentments, but it is possible. In chapter 11, I will discuss easy and practical techniques to heal these resentments.

Quite often, when one partner makes a positive change the other will also change. This predictable coincidence is one of those magical things about life. When the student is ready the teacher appears. When the question is asked then the answer is heard. When we are truly ready to receive then what we need will become available. When the Venusians were ready to receive, the Martians were ready to give.

LEARNING TO GIVE

A man's deepest fear is that he is not good enough or that he is incompetent. He compensates for this fear by focusing on increasing his power and competence. Success, achievement, and efficiency are foremost in his life. Before they discovered the Venusians, the Martians were so concerned with these qualities that they didn't care about anything or anybody else. A man appears most uncaring when he is afraid.

A man's deepest fear is that he is not good enough or that he is incompetent.

Just as women are afraid of receiving, men are afraid of giving. To extend himself in giving to others means to risk failure, correction, and disapproval. These consequences are most painful because deep inside his unconscious he holds an incorrect belief that he is not good enough. This belief was formed and reinforced in childhood every time he thought he was expected to do better. When his accomplishments went unnoticed or were unappreciated, deep in his unconscious he began forming the incorrect belief that he was not good enough.

Just as women are afraid of receiving, men are afraid of giving.

A man is particularly vulnerable to this incorrect belief. It generates within him the fear of failing. He wants to give but is afraid he will fail, so he doesn't try. If his biggest fear is inadequacy, he naturally is going to avoid any unnecessary risks.

Ironically, when a man really cares a lot his fear of failure increases, and he gives less. To avoid failure he stops giving to the people he wants to give to the most.

When a man is insecure he may compensate by not caring about anybody except himself. His most automatic defensive response is to say "I don't care." For this reason, the Martians did not let themselves feel or care too much for others. By becoming successful and powerful they finally realized that they were good enough and that they could succeed in giving. They then discovered the Venusians.

Although they had always been good enough, the process of proving their power prepared them for the wisdom of selfesteem. Through becoming successful and then looking back, they realized that their every failure was necessary to achieve their later successes. Every mistake had taught them a very important lesson necessary to achieve their goals. Thus they realized they had always been good enough.

It Is OK to Make Mistakes

The first step for a man in learning how to give more is to realize that it is OK to make mistakes and it is OK to fail and that he doesn't have to have all the answers.

I remember the story of a woman who complained that her partner would never make a commitment to marriage. To her it seemed that he did not care as much as she did. One day, however, she happened to say that she was so happy being with him. Even if they were poor, she would want to be with him. The next day he proposed. He needed the acceptance and encouragement that he was good enough for her, and then he could feel how much he cared.

Just as women are sensitive to feeling rejected when they don't get the attention they need, men are sensitive to feeling that they have failed when a woman talks about problems. This is why it is so hard for him to listen sometimes. He wants to be her hero. When *she* is disappointed or unhappy over anything, *he* feels like a failure. Her unhappiness confirms his deepest fear: he is just not good enough. Many women today don't realize how vulnerable men are and how much they need love too. Love helps him to know that he is enough to fulfill others.

It is difficult for a man to listen to a woman when she is unhappy or disappointed because he feels like a failure.

A young boy who is fortunate enough to see his father succeed in fulfilling his mother enters relationships as an adult with a rare confidence that he can succeed in fulfilling his partner. He is not terrified of commitment because he knows he can deliver. He also knows that when he doesn't deliver he is still adequate and still deserves love and appreciation for doing his best. He does not condemn himself because he knows he is not perfect and that he is always doing his best and his best is good enough. He is able to apologize for his mistakes because he expects forgiveness, love, and appreciation for doing his best.

He knows that everyone makes mistakes. He saw his father make mistakes and continue to love himself. He witnessed his mother loving and forgiving his father through all his mistakes. He felt her trust and encouragement, even though at times his father had disappointed her.

Many men did not have successful role models while they were growing up. For them staying in love, getting married, and having a family is as difficult as flying a jumbo jet without any training. He may be able to take off, but he is sure to crash. It is difficult to continue flying once you have crashed the plane a few times. Or if you witnessed your father crash. Without a good training manual for relationships, it is easy to understand why many men and women give up on relationships.

5

Speaking Different Languages

When the Martians and Venusians first got together, they encountered many of the problems with relationships we have today. Because they recognized that they were different, they were able to solve these problems. One of the secrets of their success was good communication.

Ironically, they communicated well because they spoke different languages. When they had problems, they would just go to a translator for assistance. Everyone knew that people from Mars and people from Venus spoke different languages, so when there was a conflict they didn't start judging or fighting but instead pulled out their phrase dictionaries to understand each other more fully. If that didn't work they went to a translator for help.

The Martian and Venusian languages had the same words, but the way they were used gave different meanings.

You see, the Martian and Venusian languages had the same words, but the way they were used gave different meanings. Their expressions were similar, but they had different connotations or emotional emphasis. Misinterpreting each other was very easy. So when communication problems emerged, they assumed it was just one of those expected misunderstandings and that with a little assistance they would surely understand each other. They experienced a trust and acceptance that we rarely experience today.

EXPRESSING FEELINGS VERSUS EXPRESSING INFORMATION

Even today we still need translators. Men and women seldom mean the same things even when they use the same words. For example, when a woman says "I feel like you *never* listen," she does not expect the word *never* to be taken literally. Using the word *never* is just a way of expressing the frustration she is feeling at the moment. It is not to be taken as if it were factual information.

To fully express their feelings, women assume poetic license to use various superlatives, metaphors, and generalizations.

To fully express their feelings, women assume poetic license and use various superlatives, metaphors, and generalizations. Men mistakenly take these expressions literally. Because they misunderstand the intended meaning, they commonly react in an unsupportive manner. In the following chart ten complaints easily misinterpreted are listed, as well as how a man might respond unsupportively.

TEN COMMON COMPLAINTS THAT ARE EASILY MISINTERPRETED

Women say things like this: "We never go out."
Men respond like this: "That's not true. We went out last week."
Women say things like this: "Everyone ignores me."
Men respond like this: "I'm sure some people notice you."
Women say things like this: "I am so tired, I can't do anything."
Men respond like this: "That's ridiculous. You are not helpless."
Women say things like this: "I want to forget everything."
Men respond like this: "If you don't like your job, then quit."
Women say things like this: "The house is always a mess."
Men respond like this: "It's not always a mess."
Women say things like this: "No one listens to me anymore."
Men respond like this: "But I am listening to you right now."
Women say things like this: "Nothing is working."
Men respond like this: "Are you saying it is my fault?"
Women say things like this: "You don't love me anymore."
Men respond like this: "Of course I do. That's why I'm here."
Women say things like this: "We are always in a hurry."
Men respond like this: "We are not. Friday we were relaxed."
Women say things like this: I want more romance."
Men respond like this: "Are you saying I am not romantic?"

You can see how a "literal" translation of a woman's words could easily mislead a man who is used to using speech as a means of conveying only facts and information. We can also see how a man's responses might lead to an argument. Unclear and unloving communication is the biggest problem in relationships. The number one complaint women have in relationships is: "I don't feel heard." Even this complaint is misunderstood and misinterpreted!

The number one complaint women have in relationships is: "I don't feel heard." Even this complaint is misunderstood by men!

A man's literal translation of "I don't feel heard" leads him to invalidate and argue with her feelings. He thinks he *has* heard her if he can repeat what she has said. A translation of a woman saying "I don't feel heard" so that a man could correctly interpret it is: "I feel as though you don't fully understand what I really mean to say or care about how I feel. Would you show me that you are interested in what I have to say?"

If a man really understood her complaint then he would argue less and be able to respond more positively. When men and women are on the verge of arguing, they are generally misunderstanding each other. At such times, it is important to rethink or translate what they have heard.

Because many men don't understand that women express feelings differently, they inappropriately judge or invalidate their partner's feelings. This leads to arguments. The ancient Martians learned to avoid many arguments through correct understanding. Whenever listening stirred up some resistance, they consulted their *Venusian/Martian Phrase Dictionary* for a correct interpretation.

WHEN VENUSIANS TALK

The following section contains various excerpts from the lost *Venusian/Martian Phrase Dictionary.* Each of the ten complaints listed above is translated so that a man can understand their real and intended meaning. Each translation also contains a hint of how she wants him to respond.

You see, when a Venusian is upset she not only uses generalities, and so forth, but also is asking for a particular kind of support. She doesn't directly ask for that support because on Venus everyone knew that dramatic language implied a particular request.

In each of the translations this hidden request for support is revealed. If a man listening to a woman can recognize the implied request and respond accordingly, she will feel truly heard and loved.

The Venusian/Martian Phrase Dictionary

> **"We never go out"** translated into Martian means "I feel like going out and doing something together. We always have such a fun time, and I love being with you. What do you think? Would you take me out to dinner? It has been a few days since we went out."

Without this translation, when a woman says "We never go out" a man may hear "You are not doing your job. What a disappointment you have turned out to be. We never do anything together anymore because you are lazy, unromantic, and just boring."

> **"Everyone ignores me"** translated into Martian means "Today, I am feeling ignored and unacknowledged. I feel as though nobody sees me. Of course I'm sure some people see me, but they don't seem to care about me. I suppose I am also disappointed that you have been so busy

lately. I really do appreciate how hard you are working and sometimes I start to feel like I am not important to you. I am afraid your work is more important than me. Would you give me a hug and tell me how special I am to you?"

Without this translation, when a woman says "Everyone ignores me" a man may hear "I am so unhappy. I just can't get the attention I need. Everything is completely hopeless. Even you don't notice me, and you are the person who is supposed to love me. You should be ashamed. You are so unloving. I would never ignore you this way."

"I am so tired, I can't do anything" translated into Martian means "I have been doing so much today. I really need a rest before I can do anything more. I am so lucky to have your support. Would you give me a hug and reassure me that I am doing a good job and that I deserve a rest?"

Without this translation, when a woman says "I am so tired, I can't do anything" a man may hear "I do everything and you do nothing. You should do more. I can't do it all. I feel so hopeless. I want a 'real man' to live with. Picking you was a big mistake."

"I want to forget everything" translated into Martian means "I want you to know that I love my work and my life but today I am so overwhelmed. I would love to do something really nurturing for myself before I have to be responsible again. Would you ask me 'What's the matter?' and then listen with empathy without offering any solutions? I just want to feel you understanding the pressures I feel. It would make me feel so much better. It helps me to relax. Tomorrow I will get back to being responsible and handling things."

Without this translation, when a woman says "I want to forget everything" a man may hear "I have to do so much that I don't want to do. I am so unhappy with you and our relationship. I want a better partner who can make my life more fulfilling. You are doing a terrible job."

"This house is always a mess" translated into Martian means "Today I feel like relaxing, but the house is so messy. I am frustrated and I need a rest. I hope you don't expect me to clean it all up. Would you agree with me that it is a mess and then offer to help clean up part of it?"

Without this translation, when a woman says "This house is always a mess" a man may hear "This house is a mess because of you. I do everything possible to clean it up, and before I have finished, you have messed it up again. You are a lazy slob and I don't want to live with you unless you change. Clean up or clear out!"

"No one listens to me anymore" translated into Martian means "I am afraid I am boring to you. I am afraid you are no longer interested in me. I seem to be very sensitive today. Would you give me some special attention? I would love it. I've had a hard day and feel as though no one wants to hear what I have to say.

"Would you listen to me and continue to ask me supportive questions such as: 'What happened today? What else happened? How did you feel? What did you want? How else do you feel?' Also support me by saying caring, acknowledging, and reassuring statements such as: 'Tell me more' or 'That's right' or 'I know what you mean' or 'I understand.' Or just listen, and occasionally when I pause make one of these reassuring sounds: 'oh,' 'humph,' 'uh-huh,' and

'hmmm.' " (*Note:* Martians had never heard of these sounds before arriving on Venus.)

Without this translation, when a woman says "No one listens to me anymore" he may hear "I give you my attention but you don't listen to me. You used to. You have become a very boring person to be with. I want someone exciting and interesting and you are definitely not that person. You have disappointed me. You are selfish, uncaring, and bad."

"Nothing is working" translated into Martian means "Today I am so overwhelmed *and* I am so grateful that I can share my feelings with you. It helps me so much to feel better. Today it seems like nothing I do works. I know that this is not true, but I sure feel that way when I get so overwhelmed by all the things I still have to do. Would you give me a hug and tell me that I am doing a great job. It would sure feel good."

Without this translation, when a woman says "Nothing is working" a man may hear "You never do anything right. I can't trust you. If I hadn't listened to you I wouldn't be in this mess. Another man would have fixed things, but you made them worse."

"You don't love me anymore" translated into Martian means "Today I am feeling as though you don't love me. I am afraid I have pushed you away. I know you really do love me, you do so much for me. Today I am just feeling a little insecure. Would you reassure me of your love and tell me those three magic words, I love you. When you do that it feels so good."

Without this translation, when a woman says "You don't love me anymore" a man may hear "I have given you the best years of my life, and you have given me nothing. You used me. You are selfish and cold. You do what you want to do, for you and only you. You do not care about anybody. I was a fool for loving you. Now I have nothing."

"We are always in a hurry" translated into Martian means "I feel so rushed today. I don't like rushing. I wish our life was not so hurried. I know it is nobody's fault and I certainly don't blame you. I know you are doing your best to get us there on time and I really appreciate how much you care.

"Would you empathize with me and say something like, 'It *is* hard always rushing around. I don't always like rushing either.' "

Without this translation, when a woman says "We are always in a hurry" a man may hear "You are so irresponsible. You wait until the last minute to do everything. I can never be happy when I am with you. We are always rushing to avoid being late. You ruin things every time I am with you. I am so much happier when I am not around you."

"I want more romance" translated into Martian means "Sweetheart, you have been working so hard lately. Let's take some time out for ourselves. I love it when we can relax and be alone without the kids around and no work pressures. You are so romantic. Would you surprise me with flowers sometime soon and take me out on a date? I love being romanced."

Without this translation, when a woman says "I want more romance" a man may hear "You don't satisfy me anymore. I am not turned on to you. Your romantic skills are definitely inadequate. You

have never really fulfilled me. I wish you were more like other men I have been with."

After using this dictionary for a few years, a man doesn't need to pick it up each time he feels blamed or criticized. He begins to understand the way women think and feel. He learns that these kinds of dramatic phrases are not to be taken literally. They are just the way women express feeling more fully. That's the way it was done on Venus and people from Mars need to remember that!

WHEN MARTIANS DON'T TALK

One of the big challenges for men is correctly to interpret and support a woman when she is talking about her feelings. The biggest challenge for women is correctly to interpret and support a man when he isn't talking. Silence is most easily misinterpreted by women.

The biggest challenge for women is correctly to interpret and support a man when he *isn't* talking.

Quite often a man will suddenly stop communicating and become silent. This was unheard of on Venus. At first a woman thinks the man is deaf. She thinks that maybe he doesn't hear what's being said and that is why he is not responding.

You see men and women think and process information very differently. Women think out loud, sharing their process of inner discovery with an interested listener. Even today, a woman often discovers what she wants to say through the process of just talking. This process of just letting thoughts flow freely and expressing them out loud helps her to tap into her intuition. This process is perfectly normal and especially necessary sometimes.

But men process information very differently. Before they talk or respond, they first silently "mull over" or think about what they have heard or experienced. Internally and silently they figure out the most correct or useful response. They first formulate it inside and then express it. This process could take from minutes to hours. And to make matters even more confusing for women, if he does not have enough information to process an answer, a man may not respond at all.

Women need to understand that when he is silent, he is saying "I don't know what to say yet, but I am thinking about it." Instead what they hear is "I am not responding to you because I don't care about you and I am going to ignore you. What you have said to me is not important and therefore I am not responding."

How She Reacts to His Silence

Women misinterpret a man's silence. Depending on how she is feeling that day she may begin to imagine the very worst—"He hates me, he doesn't love me, he is leaving me forever." This may then trigger her deepest fear, which is "I am afraid that if he rejects me then I will never be loved. I don't

deserve to be loved."

When a man is silent it is easy for a woman to imagine the worst because the only times a woman would be silent are when what she had to say would be hurtful or when she didn't want to talk to a person because she didn't trust him anymore and wanted to have nothing to do with him. No wonder women become insecure when a man suddenly becomes quiet!

When a man is silent it is easy for a woman to imagine the worst.

When a woman listens to another woman, she will continue to reassure the speaker that she is listening and that she cares. Instinctively when the speaker pauses the female listener will reassure the speaker by making reassuring responses like "oh, uh-huh, hmmm, ah, ah-ha, or humph."

Without these reassuring responses, a man's silence can be very threatening. Through understanding a man's cave, women can learn to interpret a man's silence correctly, and to respond to it.

Understanding the Cave

Women have a lot to learn about men before their relationships can be really fulfilling. They need to learn that when a man is upset or stressed he will automatically stop talking and go to his "cave" to work things out. They need to learn that no one is allowed in that cave, not even the man's best friends. This was the way it was on Mars. Women should not become scared that they have done something terribly wrong. They need gradually to learn that if you just let men go into their caves, after a while they will come out and everything will be fine.

This lesson is difficult for women because on Venus one of the golden rules was never to abandon a friend when she was upset. It just doesn't seem loving to abandon her favorite Martian when he is upset. Because she cares for him, a woman wants to come into his cave and offer him help.

In addition, she often mistakenly assumes that if she could ask him lots of questions about how he is feeling and be a good listener, then he would feel better. This only upsets Martians more. She instinctively wants to support him in the way that she would want to be supported. Her intentions are good, but the outcome is counterproductive.

Both men and women need to stop offering the method of caring they would prefer and start to learn the different ways their partners think, feel, and react.

Why Men Go into Their Caves

Men go into their caves or become quiet for a variety of reasons:

1. He needs to think about a problem and find a practical solution to the problem.

2. He doesn't have an answer to a question or a problem. Men were never taught to say "Gee, I don't have an answer. I need to go into my cave and find one." Other men assume he is doing just that when he becomes quiet.

3. He has become upset or stressed. At such times he needs to be alone to cool off and find his control again. He doesn't want to do or say anything he might regret.

4. He needs to find himself. This fourth reason becomes very important when men are in love. At times they begin to lose and forget themselves. They can feel that too much intimacy robs them of their power. They need to regulate how close they get. Whenever they get too close so as to lose themselves, alarm bells go off and they are on their way into the cave. As a result they are rejuvenated and find their loving and powerful self again.

Why Women Talk

Women talk for a variety of reasons. Sometimes women talk for the same reasons that men stop talking. These are four common reasons that women talk:

1. To convey or gather information. (This is generally the only reason a man talks.)

2. To explore and discover what it is she wants to say.(He stops talking to figure out inside what he wants to say. She talks to think out loud.)

3. To feel better and more centered when she is upset.(He stops talking when he is upset. In his cave he has a chance to cool off.)

4. To create intimacy. Through sharing her inner feelings she is able to know her loving self. (A Martian stops talking to find himself again. Too much intimacy, he fears, will rob him of himself.)

Without this vital understanding of our differences and needs it is easy to see why couples struggle so much in relationships.

Getting Burned by the Dragon

It is important for women to understand not to try and get a man to talk before he is ready. While discussing this topic in one of my seminars, a Native American shared that in her tribe mothers would instruct young women getting married to remember that when a man was upset or stressed he would withdraw into his cave. She was not to take it personally because it would happen from time to time. It did not mean that he did not love her. They assured her that he would come back. But most important they warned the young woman never to follow him into his cave. If she did then she would get burned by the dragon who protected the cave.

Never go into a man's cave or you will be burned by the dragon!

Much unnecessary conflict has resulted from a woman following a man into his cave. Women just haven't understood that men really do need to be alone or silent when they are upset. When a man withdraws into his cave a woman just doesn't understand what is happening. She naturally tries to get him to talk. If there is a problem she hopes to nurture him by drawing him out and getting him to talk about it.

She asks "Is there something wrong?" He says "No." But she can feel he is upset. She wonders why he is withholding his feelings. Instead of letting him work it out inside his cave she unknowingly interrupts his internal process. She asks again "I know something is bothering you, what is it?"

He says "It's nothing."

She asks "It's not nothing. Something's bothering you. What are you feeling?"

He says "Look, I'm fine. Now leave me alone!"

She says "How can you treat me like this? You never talk to me anymore. How am I supposed to know what you are feeling? You don't love me. I feel so rejected by you."

At this point he loses control and begins saying things that he will regret later. His dragon comes out and burns her.

WHEN MARTIANS DO TALK

Women get burned not only when they unknowingly invade a man's introspective time but also when they misinterpret his expressions, which are generally warnings that he is either in his cave or on his way to the cave. When asked "What's the matter?" a Martian will say something brief like "It's nothing" or "I am OK."

These brief signals are generally the only way a Venusian knows to give him space to work out his feelings alone. Instead of saying "I am upset and I need some time to be alone," men just become quiet.

In the following chart six commonly expressed abbreviated warning signals are listed as well as how a woman might unknowingly respond in an intrusive and unsupportive manner:

Six Common Abbreviated Warning Signals

When a woman asks "What's the matter?"

A man says: "I'm OK" or "It's OK."

A woman may respond: "I know something's wrong. What is it?"

A man says: "I'm fine" or "It's fine."

A woman may respond: "But you seem upset. Let's talk."

A man says: "It's nothing."

A woman may respond: "I want to help. I know something is bothering you. What is it?"

A man says: "It's all right" or "I'm all right."

A woman may respond: "Are you sure? I am happy to help you."

A man says: "It's no big deal."

A woman may respond: "But something is upsetting you. I think we should talk."

A man says: "It's no problem."

A woman may respond: "But it is a problem. I could help."

When a man makes one of the above abbreviated comments he generally wants silent acceptance or space. At times like this, to avoid misinterpretation and unnecessary panic, the Venusians consulted their *Martian/Venusian Phrase Dictionary.* Without this assistance, women misinterpret these abbreviated expressions.

Women need to know that when a man says "I am OK" it is an abbreviated version of what he really means, which is "I am OK because I can deal with this alone. I do not need any help. Please support me by not worrying about me. Trust that I can deal with it all by myself."

Without this translation, when he is upset and says "I am OK" it sounds to her as if he is denying his feelings or problems. She then attempts to help him by asking questions or talking about what she thinks the problem is. She does not know that he is speaking an abbreviated language. The following are excerpts from their phrase dictionary.

The Martian/Venusian Phrase Dictionary

"I'm OK" translated into Venusian means "I am OK, I can deal with my upset. I don't need any help, thank you."

Without this translation, when he says "I am OK" she may hear "I am not upset because I do not care" or she may hear "I am not willing to share with you my upset feelings. I do not trust you to be there for me."

"I'm fine" translated into Venusian means "I am fine because I am successfully dealing with my upset or problem. I don't need any help. If I do I will ask."

Without this translation, when he says "I am fine" she may hear "I don't care about what has happened. This problem is not important to me. Even if it upsets you, I don't care."

"It's nothing" translated into Venusian means "Nothing is bothering me that I cannot handle alone. Please don't ask any more questions about it."

Without this translation, when he says "Nothing is bothering me" she may hear "I don't know what is bothering me. I need you to ask me questions to assist me in discovering what is happening." At this point she proceeds to anger him by asking questions when he really wants to be left alone.

"It's all right" translated into Venusian means "This is a problem but you are not to blame. I can resolve this within myself if you don't interrupt my process by asking more questions or offering suggestions. Just act like it didn't happen and I can process it within myself more effectively."

Without this translation, when he says "It's all right" she may hear "This is the way it is supposed to be. Nothing needs to be changed. You can abuse me and I can abuse you" or she hears "It's all right this time, but remember it is your fault. You can do this once but don't do it again or else."

"It's no big deal" translated into Venusian means "It is no big deal because I can make things work again. Please don't dwell on this problem or talk more about it. That makes me more upset. I accept responsibility for solving this problem. It makes me happy to solve it."

Without this translation, when he says "It's no big deal" she may hear "You are making a big deal out of nothing. What concerns you is not important. Don't overreact."

"It's no problem" translated into Venusian means "I have no problem doing this or solving this problem. It is my pleasure to offer this gift to you."

Without this translation, when he says "It's no problem" she may hear "This is not a problem. Why are you making it a problem or asking for help?" She then mistakenly explains to him why it is a problem.

Using this *Martian/Venusian Phrase Dictionary* can assist women in understanding what men really mean when they abbreviate what they are saying. Sometimes what he is really saying is the opposite of what she hears.

WHAT TO DO WHEN HE GOES INTO HIS CAVE

In my seminars when I explain about caves and dragons, women want to know how they can shorten the time men spend in their caves. At this point I ask the men to answer, and they generally say that the more women try to get them to talk or come out, the longer it takes.

Another common comment by men is "It is hard to come out of the cave when I feel my mate disapproves of the time I spend in the cave." To make a man feel wrong for going into his cave has the effect of pushing him back into the cave even when he wants to come out.

When a man goes into his cave he is generally wounded or stressed and is trying to solve his problem alone. To give him the support that a woman would want is counterproductive. There are basically six ways to support him when he goes into his cave. (Giving him this support will also shorten the time he needs to spend alone.)

How to Support a Man in His Cave

1. Don't disapprove of his need for withdrawing.
2. Don't try to help him solve his problem by offering solutions.
3. Don't try to nurture him by asking questions about his feelings.
4. Don't sit next to the door of the cave and wait for him to come out.
5. Don't worry about him or feel sorry for him.
6. Do something that makes you happy.

If you need to "talk," write him a letter to be read later when he is out, and if you need to be nurtured, talk to a friend. Don't make him the sole source of your fulfillment.

A man wants his favorite Venusian to trust that *he* can handle what is bothering him. To be trusted that he can handle his problems is very important to his honor, pride, and self-esteem.

Not worrying about him is difficult for her. Worrying for others is one way women express their love and caring. It is a way of showing love. For a woman, being happy when the person you love is upset just doesn't seem right. He certainly doesn't want her to be happy *because* he is upset, but he does want her to be happy. He wants her to be happy so that he has one less problem to worry about. In addition he wants her to be happy because it helps him to feel loved by her. When a woman is happy and free from worry, it is easier for him to come out.

Ironically men show their love by not worrying. A man questions "How can you worry about someone whom you admire and trust?" Men commonly support one another by saying phrases such as "Don't worry, you can handle it" or "That's their problem, not yours" or "I'm sure it will work out." Men support one another by not worrying or minimizing their troubles.

It took me years to understand that my wife actually wanted me to worry for her when she was upset. Without this awareness of our different needs, I would minimize the importance of her concerns. This only made her more upset.

When a man goes into his cave he is generally trying to solve a problem. If his mate is happy or *not* needy at this time, then he has one less problem to solve before coming out. Knowing that she is happy with him also gives him more strength to deal with his problem while in the cave.

Anything that distracts her or helps her to feel good will be helpful to him. These are some examples:

Read a book
Listen to music
Work in the garden
Exercise
Get a massage
Listen to self-improvement tapes
Treat yourself to something delicious
Call a girlfriend for a good chat
Write in a journal
Go shopping
Pray or meditate
Go for a walk
Take a bubble bath
See a therapist

Watch TV or a video

The Martians also recommended that the Venusians do something enjoyable. It was hard to conceive of being happy when a friend was hurting, but the Venusians did find a way. Every time their favorite Martian went into his cave, they would go shopping or out on some other pleasing excursion. Venusians love to shop. My wife, Bonnie, sometimes uses this technique. When she sees I am in my cave, she goes shopping. I never feel like I have to apologize for my Martian side. When she can take care of herself I feel OK taking care of myself and going into my cave. She trusts that I will come back and be more loving.

She knows that when I go into my cave is not the right time to talk. When I begin showing signs of interest in her, she recognizes that I am coming out of the cave, and it is then a time to talk. Sometimes she will casually say, "When you feel like talking, I would like to spend some time together. Would you let me know when?" In this way she can test the waters without being pushy or demanding.

HOW TO COMMUNICATE SUPPORT TO A MARTIAN

Even when they are out of the cave, men want to be trusted. They don't like unsolicited advice or empathy. They need to prove themselves. Being able to accomplish things without the help of others is a feather in their cap. (While for a woman, when someone assists her, having a supportive relationship is a feather in her cap.) A man feels supported when a woman communicates in a way that says "I trust you to handle things unless you directly ask for help."

Learning to support men in this way can be very difficult in the beginning. Many women feel that the only way they can get what they need in a relationship is to criticize a man when he makes mistakes and to offer unsolicited advice. Without a role model of a mother who knew how to receive support from a man, it does not occur to women that they can encourage a man to give more by directly asking for support—without being critical or offering advice. In addition, if he behaves in a manner that she does not like she can simply and directly tell him that she doesn't like his behavior, without casting judgment that he is wrong or bad.

How to Approach a Man with Criticism or Advice

Without an understanding of how they are turning men off with unsolicited advice and criticism, many women feel powerless to get what they need and want from a man. Nancy was frustrated in her relationships. She said, "I still don't know how to approach a man with criticism and advice. What if his table manners are atrocious or he dresses really, really badly? What if he's a nice guy but you see he's got a pattern of behaving with people in a way that makes him look like a jerk and that's causing him trouble in relationships with others? What should I do? No matter how I tell him, he gets angry or defensive or just ignores me."

The answer is that she should definitely not offer criticism or advice unless he asks. Instead, she should try giving him loving acceptance. This is what he needs, not lectures. As he begins to feel her acceptance, he will begin to ask what she thinks. If, however, he detects her demanding that he change, he will not ask for advice or suggestions. Especially in an intimate relationship, men need to feel very secure before they open up and ask for support.

In addition to patiently trusting her partner to grow and change, if a woman is not getting what she needs and wants, she can and should share her feelings and make requests (but again without giving advice or criticism). This is an art that requires caring and creativity. These are four possible approaches:

1. A woman can tell a man that she doesn't like the way he dresses without giving him a lecture on how to dress. She could say casually as he is getting dressed "I don't like that shirt on you. Would you wear another one tonight?" If he is annoyed by that comment, then she should respect his sensitivities and apologize. She could say "I'm sorry—I didn't mean to tell you how to dress."

2. If he is that sensitive—and some men are—then she could try talking about it at another time. She could say "Remember that blue shirt you wore with the green slacks? I didn't like that combination. Would you try wearing it with your gray slacks?"

3. She could directly ask "Would you let me take you shopping one day? I would love to pick out an outfit for you." If he says no, then she can be sure that he doesn't want any more mothering. If he says yes, be sure not to offer too much advice. Remember his sensitivities.

4. She could say "There is something I want to talk about but I don't know how to say it. *[Pause.]* I don't want to offend you, but I also really want to say it. Would you listen and then suggest to me a better way I could say it?" This helps him to prepare himself for the shock and then he happily discovers that it is not such a big deal.

Let's explore another example. If she doesn't like his table manners and they are alone, she could say (without a disapproving look) "Would you use your silverware?" or "Would you drink from your glass?" If, however, you are in front of others, it is wise to say nothing and not even notice. Another day you could say "Would you use your silverware when we eat in front of the kids?" or "When you eat with your fingers, I hate it. I get so picky about these little things. When you eat with me, would you use your silverware?"

If he behaves in a way that embarrasses you, wait for a time when no one else is around and then share your feelings. Don't tell him how he "should behave" or that he is wrong; instead share honest feelings in a loving and brief way. You could say "The other night at the party, I didn't like it when you were so loud. When I'm around, would you try to keep it down?" If he gets upset and doesn't like this comment, then simply apologize for being critical.

This art of giving negative feedback and asking for support is discussed thoroughly in chapters 9 and 12. In addition, the best times for having these conversations is explored in the next chapter.

When a Man Doesn't Need Help

A man may start to feel smothered when a woman tries to comfort him or help him solve a problem. He feels as though she doesn't trust him to handle his problems. He may feel controlled, as if she is treating him like a child, or he may feel she wants to change him.

This doesn't mean that a man does not need comforting love. Women need to understand that they

are nurturing him when they abstain from offering unsolicited advice to solve his problems. He needs her loving support but in a different way than she thinks. To withhold correcting a man or trying to improve him are ways to nurture him. Giving advice can be nurturing only if he directly asks for it.

A man looks for advice or help only after he has done what he can do alone. If he receives too much assistance or receives it too soon, he will lose his sense of power and strength. He becomes either lazy or insecure. Instinctively men support one another by not offering advice or help unless specifically approached and asked.

In coping with problems, a man knows he has to first go a certain distance by himself, and then if he needs help he can ask for it without losing his strength, power, and dignity. To offer help to a man at the wrong time could easily be taken as an insult.

When a man is carving the turkey for Thanksgiving and his partner keeps offering advice on how and what to cut, he feels mistrusted. He resists her and is determined to do it his way on his own. On the other hand, if a man offers her assistance in cutting the turkey she feels loved and cared for.

When a woman suggests that her husband follow the advice of some expert, he may be offended. I remember one woman asking me why her husband got so angry at her. She explained to me that before sex she had asked him if he had reviewed his notes from a taped lecture by me on the secrets of great sex. She didn't realize this was the ultimate insult to him. Although he had appreciated the tapes, he didn't want her telling him what to do by reminding him to follow my advice. He wanted her to trust that he knew what to do!

While men want to be trusted, women want caring. When a man says to a woman "What's the matter, honey?" with a concerned look on his face, she feels comforted by his caring. When a woman in a similar caring and concerned way says to a man "What's the matter, honey?" he may feel insulted or repulsed. He feels as though she doesn't trust him to handle things.

It is very difficult for a man to differentiate between empathy and sympathy. He hates to be pitied. A woman may say "I am so sorry I hurt you." He will say "It was no big deal" and push away her support. She on the other hand loves to hear him say "I'm sorry I hurt you." She then feels he really cares. Men need to find ways to show they care while women need to find ways to show they trust.

It is very difficult for a man to differentiate between empathy and sympathy. He hates to be pitied.

Too Much Caring Is Smothering

When I first married Bonnie, the night before I would leave town to teach a weekend seminar, she would ask me what time I was getting up. Then she would ask what time my plane left. Then she would do some mental figuring and warn me that I hadn't left enough time to catch my plane. Each time she thought she was supporting me, but I didn't feel it. I felt offended. I had been traveling around the world for fourteen years teaching courses, and I had never missed a plane.

Then in the morning, before I left, she asked me a string of questions such as, "Do you have your ticket? Do you have your wallet? Do you have enough money? Did you pack socks? Do you know where you are staying?" She thought she was loving me, but I felt mistrusted and was annoyed. Eventually I let her know that I appreciated her loving intention but that I didn't like being mothered in this way.

I shared with her that if she wanted to mother me, then the way I wanted to be mothered was to be unconditionally loved and trusted. I said, "If I miss a plane, don't tell me 'I told you so.' Trust that I will learn my lesson and adjust accordingly. If I forget my toothbrush or shaving kit, let me deal with it. Don't tell me about it when I call." With an awareness of what I wanted, instead of what she would have wanted, it was easier for her to succeed in supporting me.

A Success Story

Once, on a trip to Sweden to teach my relationship seminar, I called back to California from New York, informing Bonnie that I had left my passport at home. She reacted in such a beautiful and loving way. She didn't lecture me on being more responsible. Instead she laughed and said, "Oh my goodness, John, you have such adventures. What are you going to do?"

I asked her to fax my passport to the Swedish consulate, and the problem was solved. She was so cooperative. Never once did she succumb to lecturing me on being more prepared. She was even proud of me for finding a solution to my problem.

MAKING LITTLE CHANGES

One day I noticed that when my children asked me to do things I would always say "no problem." It was my way of saying I would be happy to do that. My stepdaughter Julie asked me one day, "Why do you always say 'no problem'?" I didn't actually know right away. After a while I realized that it was another of those deeply ingrained Martian habits. With this new awareness I started saying "I would be happy to do that." This phrase expressed my implied message and certainly felt more loving to my Venusian daughter.

This example symbolizes a very important secret for enriching relationships. Little changes can be made without sacrificing who we are. This was the secret of success for the Martians and Venusians. They were both careful not to sacrifice their true natures, but they were also willing to make small changes in the way they interacted. They learned how relationships could work better by creating or changing a few simple phrases.

The important point here is that to enrich our relationships we need to make little changes. Big changes generally require some suppression of who we truly are. This is not good.

Giving some reassurance when he goes into his cave is a small change that a man can make without changing his nature. To make this change he must realize that women really do need some reassurance, especially if they are to worry less. If a man doesn't understand the differences between men and women, then he cannot comprehend why his sudden silence is such a cause for worry. By giving some reassurance he can remedy the situation.

On the other hand if he does not know how he is different, then when she is upset by his tendency to

go into his cave, he may give up going into his cave in an attempt to fulfill her. This is a big mistake. If he gives up the cave (and denies his true nature) he becomes irritable, overly sensitive, defensive, weak, passive, or mean. And to make matters worse, he doesn't know why he has become so unpleasant.

When a woman is upset by his going into the cave, instead of giving up the cave, a man can make a few small changes and the problem can be alleviated. He does not need to deny his true needs or reject his masculine nature.

HOW TO COMMUNICATE SUPPORT TO A VENUSIAN

As we have discussed, when a man goes into his cave or becomes quiet he is saying "I need some time to think about this, please stop talking to me. I will be back." He doesn't realize that a woman may hear "I don't love you, I can't stand to listen to you, I am leaving and I am never coming back!" To counteract this message and to give her the correct message he can learn to say the four magic words: "I will be back."

When a man pulls away, a woman appreciates him saying out loud "I need some time to think about this, I will be back" or "I need some time to be alone. I will be back." It is amazing how the simple words "I will be back" make such a profound difference.

Women greatly appreciate this reassurance. When a man understands how important this is to a woman, then he is able to remember to give this reassurance.

If a woman felt abandoned or rejected by her father or if her mother felt rejected by her husband, then she (the child) will be even more sensitive to feeling abandoned. For this reason, she should never be judged for needing this reassurance. Similarly, a man should not be judged for his need for the cave.

A woman should not be judged for needing this reassurance, just as a man should not be judged for needing to withdraw.

When a woman is less wounded by her past and if she understands a man's need to spend time in the cave, then her need for reassurance will be less.

I remember making this point in a seminar and a woman asking, "I am so sensitive to my husband's silence, but as a child I never felt abandoned or rejected. My mother never felt rejected by my father. Even when they got a divorce they did it in a loving way."

Then she laughed. She realized how she had been duped. Then she started to cry. Of course her mother had felt rejected. Of course she had felt rejected. Her parents were divorced! Like her parents, she also had denied their painful feelings.

In an age when divorce is so common, it is even more important that men be sensitive to giving reassurance. Just as men can support women by making little changes, women need to do the same.

HOW TO COMMUNICATE WITHOUT BLAME

A man commonly feels attacked and blamed by a woman's feelings, especially when she is upset and talks about problems. Because he doesn't understand how we are different, he doesn't readily relate to her need to talk about all of her feelings.

He mistakenly assumes she is telling him about her feelings because she thinks he is somehow responsible or to be blamed. Because she is upset and she is talking to him, he assumes she is upset with him. When she complains he hears blame. Many men don't understand the (Venusian) need to share upset feelings with the people they love.

With practice and an awareness of our differences, women can learn how to express their feelings without having them sound like blaming. To reassure a man that he is not being blamed, when a woman expresses her feelings she could pause after a few minutes of sharing and tell him how much she appreciates him for listening.

She could say some of the following comments:

- "I'm sure glad I can talk about it."
- "It sure feels good to talk about it."
- "I'm feeling so relieved that I can talk about this."
- "I'm sure glad I can complain about all this. It makes me feel so much better."
- "Well, now that I've talked about it, I feel much better. Thank you."

This simple change can make a world of difference.

In this same vein, as she describes her problems she can support him by appreciating the things he has done to make her life easier and more fulfilling. For example, if she is complaining about work, occasionally she could mention that it is so nice to have him in her life to come home to; if she is complaining about the house, then she could mention that she appreciates that he fixed the fence; or if she is complaining about finances, mention that she really appreciates how hard he works; or if she is complaining about the frustrations of being a parent, she could mention that she is glad she has his help.

Sharing Responsibility

Good communication requires participation on both sides. A man needs to work at remembering that complaining about problems does not mean blaming and that when a woman complains she is generally just letting go of her frustrations by talking about them. A woman can work at letting him know that though she is complaining she also appreciates him.

For example, my wife just came in and asked how I was doing on this chapter. I said, "I'm almost done. How was your day?"

She said, "Oh, there is so much to do. We hardly have any time together." The old me would have become defensive and then reminded her of all the time we have spent together, or I would have told her how important it was to meet my deadline. This would have just created tension.

The new me, aware of our differences, understood she was looking for reassurance and

understanding and not justifications and explanations. I said, "You're right, we have been really busy. Sit down here on my lap, let me give you a hug. It's been a long day."

She then said, "You feel really good." This was the appreciation I needed in order to be more available to her. She then proceeded to complain more about her day and how exhausted she was. After a few minutes she paused. I then offered to drop off the babysitter so she could relax and meditate before dinner.

She said, "Really, you'll take the babysitter home? That would be great. Thank you!" Again she gave me the appreciation and acceptance I needed to feel like a successful partner, even when she was tired and exhausted.

Women don't think of giving appreciation because they assume a man knows how much she appreciates being heard. He doesn't know. When she is talking about problems, he needs to be reassured that he is still loved and appreciated.

Men feel frustrated by problems unless they are doing something to solve them. By appreciating him, a woman can help him realize that just by listening he is also helping.

A woman does not have to suppress her feelings or even change them to support her partner. She does, however, need to express them in a way that doesn't make him feel attacked, accused, or blamed. Making a few small changes can make a big difference.

Four Magic Words of Support

The four magic words to support a man are "It's not your fault." When a woman is expressing her upset feelings she can support a man by pausing occasionally to encourage him by saying "I really appreciate your listening, and if this sounds as if I'm saying it's your fault, that's not what I mean. It's not your fault."

A woman can learn to be sensitive to her listener when she understands his tendency to start feeling like a failure when he hears a lot of problems.

Just the other day my sister called me and talked about a difficult experience that she was going through. As I listened I kept remembering that to support my sister I didn't have to give her any solutions. She needed someone just to listen. After ten minutes of just listening and occasionally saying things like "uh-huh," "oh," and "really!" she then said, "Well, thank you, John. I feel so much better."

It was much easier to hear her because I knew she was not blaming me. She was blaming someone else. I find it more difficult when my wife is unhappy because it is easier for me to feel blamed. However, when my wife encourages me to listen by appreciating me, it becomes much easier to be a good listener.

What to Do When You Feel Like Blaming

Reassuring a man that it is not his fault or that he is not being blamed works only as long as she truly is not blaming him, disapproving of him, or criticizing him. If she is attacking him, then she should share her feelings with someone else. She should wait until she is more loving and centered to talk to him. She could share her resentful feelings with someone she is not upset with, who will be able to

give her the support she needs. Then when she feels more loving and forgiving she can successfully approach him to share her feelings. In chapter 11 we will explore in greater detail how to communicate difficult feelings.

How to Listen Without Blaming

A man often blames a woman for being blaming when she is innocently talking about problems. This is very destructive to the relationship because it blocks communication.

Imagine a woman saying "All we ever do is work, work, work. We don't have any fun anymore. You are so serious." A man could very easily feel she is blaming him.

If he feels blamed, I suggest he not blame back and say "I feel like you are blaming me."

Instead I suggest saying "It is difficult to hear you say I am so serious. Are you saying it is all my fault that we don't have more fun?"

Or he could say "It hurts when I hear you say I am so serious and we don't have any fun. Are you saying that it is all my fault?"

In addition, to improve the communication he can give her a way out. He could say "It feels like you are saying it is all my fault that we work so much. Is that true?"

Or he could say "When you say we don't have any fun and that I am so serious, I feel like you are saying it is all my fault. Are you?"

All of these responses are respectful and give her a chance to take back any blame that he might have felt. When she says "Oh, no, I'm not saying it's all your fault" he will probably feel somewhat relieved.

Another approach that I find most helpful is to remember that she always has a right to be upset and that once she gets it out, she will feel much better. This awareness allows me to relax and remember that if I can listen without taking it personally, then when she needs to complain she will be so appreciative of me. Even if she was blaming me, she will not hold on to it.

The Art of Listening

As a man learns to listen and interpret a woman's feelings correctly, communication becomes easier. As with any art, listening requires practice. Each day when I get home, I will generally seek out Bonnie and ask her about her day, thus practicing this art of listening.

If she is upset or has had a stressful day, at first I will feel that she is saying I am somehow responsible and thus to blame. My greatest challenge is to not take it personally, to not misunderstand her. I do this by constantly reminding myself that we speak different languages. As I continue to ask "What else happened?" I find that there are many other things bothering her. Gradually I start to see that I am not solely responsible for her upset. After a while, when she begins to appreciate me for listening, then, even if I was *partially* responsible for her discomfort, she becomes very grateful, accepting, and loving.

Although listening is an important skill to practice, some days a man is too sensitive or stressed to translate the intended meaning of her phrases. At such times he should not even attempt to listen.

Instead he could kindly say "This isn't a good time for me. Let's talk later."

Sometimes a man doesn't realize that he can't listen until she begins talking. If he becomes very frustrated, while listening he should not try to continue—he'll just become increasingly upset. That does not serve him or her. Instead, the respectful thing to say is "I really want to hear what you are saying, but right now it is very difficult for me to listen. I think I need some time to think about what you have just said."

As Bonnie and I have learned to communicate in a way that respects our differences and understand each other's needs, our marriage has become so much easier. I have witnessed this same transformation in thousands of individuals and couples. Relationships thrive when communication reflects a ready acceptance and respect of people's innate differences.

When misunderstandings arise, remember that we speak different languages; take the time necessary to translate what your partner really means or wants to say. This definitely takes practice, but it is well worth it.

6

Men Are Like Rubber Bands

Men are like rubber bands. When they pull away, they can stretch only so far before they come springing back. rubber band is the perfect metaphor to understand the male intimacy cycle. This cycle involves getting close, pulling away, and then getting close again.

Most women are surprised to realize that even when a man loves a woman, periodically he needs to pull away before he can get closer. Men instinctively feel this urge to pull away. It is not a decision or choice. It just happens. It is neither his fault nor her fault. It is a natural cycle.

When a man loves a woman, periodically he needs to pull away before he can get closer.

Women misinterpret a man's pulling away because generally a woman pulls away for different reasons. She pulls back when she doesn't trust him to understand her feelings, when she has been hurt and is afraid of being hurt again, or when he has done something wrong and disappointed her.

Certainly a man may pull away for the same reasons, but he will also pull away even if she has done nothing wrong. He may love and trust her, and then suddenly he begins to pull away. Like a stretched rubber band, he will distance himself and then come back all on his own.

A man pulls away to fulfill his need for independence or autonomy. When he has fully stretched away, then instantly he will come springing back. When he has fully separated, then suddenly he will feel his need for love and intimacy again. Automatically he will be more motivated to give his love and receive the love he needs. When a man springs back, he picks up the relationship at whatever degree of intimacy it was when he stretched away. He doesn't feel any need for a period of getting reacquainted again.

WHAT EVERY WOMAN SHOULD KNOW ABOUT MEN

If understood, this male intimacy cycle enriches a relationship, but because it is misunderstood it creates unnecessary problems. Let's explore an example.

> Maggie was distressed, anxious, and confused. She and her boyfriend, Jeff, had been dating for six months. Everything had been so romantic. Then without any apparent reason he began to distance himself emotionally. Maggie could not understand why he had suddenly pulled away. She told me, "One minute he was so attentive, and then the next he didn't even want to talk to me. I have tried everything to get him back but it only seems to make matters worse. He seems so

distant. I don't know what I did wrong. Am I so awful?"

When Jeff pulled away, Maggie took it personally. This is a common reaction. She thought she had done something wrong and blamed herself. She wanted to make things "right again," but the more she tried to get close to Jeff the more he pulled away.

After taking my seminar Maggie was so relieved. Her anxiety and confusion immediately disappeared. Most important, she stopped blaming herself. She realized that when Jeff pulled away it was not her fault. In addition she learned why he was pulling away and how gracefully to deal with it. Months later at another seminar, Jeff thanked me for what Maggie had learned. He told me they were now engaged to be married. Maggie had discovered a secret that few women know about men.

Maggie realized that when she was trying to get close while Jeff was trying to pull away, she was actually preventing him from stretching his full distance and then springing back. By running after him, she was preventing him from ever feeling that he needed her and wanted to be with her. She realized that she had done this in every relationship. Unknowingly she had obstructed an important cycle. By trying to maintain intimacy she had prevented it.

How a Man Is Suddenly Transformed

If a man does not have the opportunity to pull away, he never gets a chance to feel his strong desire to be close. It is essential for women to understand that if they insist on continuous intimacy or "run after" their intimate male partner when he pulls away, then he will almost always be trying to escape and distance himself; he will never get a chance to feel his own passionate longing for love.

In my seminars I demonstrate this with a big rubber band. Imagine that you are holding a rubber band. Now begin stretching your rubber band by pulling it to your right. This particular rubber band can stretch twelve inches. When the rubber band is stretched twelve inches there is nowhere left to go but back. And when it returns it has a lot of power and spring.

Likewise, when a man has stretched away his full distance, he will return with a lot of power and spring. Once he pulls away to his limit, he begins to go through a transformation. His whole attitude begins to shift. This man who did not seem to care about or be interested in his partner (while he was pulling away) suddenly cannot live without her. He is now feeling again his need for intimacy. His power is back because his desire to love and be loved have been reawakened.

This is generally puzzling for a woman because in her experience if she has pulled away, becoming intimate again requires a period of reacquaintance. If she doesn't understand that men are different in this way, she may have a tendency to mistrust his sudden desire for intimacy and push him away.

Men also need to understand this difference. When a man springs back, before a woman can open up again to him she generally wants and needs time and conversation to reconnect. This transition can be more graceful if a man understands a woman may need more time to regain the same level of intimacy—especially if she felt hurt when he pulled away. Without this understanding of differences, a man may become impatient because he is suddenly available to pick up the intimacy at whatever level of intensity it was when he pulled away and she is not.

Why Men Pull Away

Men begin to feel their need for autonomy and independence after they have fulfilled their need for intimacy. Automatically when he begins to pull away, she begins to panic. What she doesn't realize is that when he pulls away and fulfills his need for autonomy then suddenly he will want to be intimate again. A man automatically alternates between needing intimacy and autonomy.

A man automatically alternates between needing intimacy and autonomy.

For example, in the beginning of his relationship Jeff was strong and full of desire. His rubber band was fully stretched. He wanted to impress her, fulfill her, please her, and get close to her. As he succeeded she also wanted to get closer. As she opened her heart to him he got closer and closer. When they achieved intimacy he felt wonderful. But after a brief period a change took place.

Imagine what happens to the rubber band. The rubber band becomes limp. Its power and stretch are gone. There is no longer any movement. This is exactly what happens to a man's desire to get close after intimacy has been achieved.

Even though this closeness is fulfilling to a man, he will inevitably begin to go through an inner shift. He will begin to feel the urge to pull away. Having temporarily fulfilled his hunger for intimacy, he now feels his hunger to be independent, to be on his own. Enough of this needing another person. He may feel he has become too dependent or may not know why he feels a need to pull away.

Why Women Panic

As Jeff instinctively pulls away without any explanation to Maggie (or to himself), Maggie reacts with fear. She panics and runs after him. She thinks she has done something wrong and has turned him off. She imagines he is expecting her to reestablish intimacy. She is afraid he will never come back.

To make matters worse, she feels powerless to get him back because she doesn't know what she did to turn him off. She doesn't know that this is just a part of his intimacy cycle. When she asks him what's the matter, he doesn't have a clear answer, and so he resists talking about it. He just continues to distance her even more.

Why Men and Women Doubt Their Love

Without an understanding of this cycle it is easy to see how men and women begin to doubt their love. Without seeing how she was preventing Jeff from finding his passion, Maggie could easily assume that Jeff didn't love her. Without getting the chance to pull away, Jeff would lose touch with his desire and passion to be close. He could easily assume that he no longer loved Maggie.

After learning to let Jeff have his distance or "space," Maggie discovered that he did come back. She practiced not running after him when he would withdraw and trusted that everything was OK. Each time he did come back.

As her trust in this process grew, it became easier for her not to panic. When he pulled away she did not run after him or even think something was wrong. She accepted this part of Jeff. The more she just accepted him at those times the sooner he would return. As Jeff began to understand his changing feelings and needs, he became more confident in his love. He was able to make a commitment. The secret of Maggie and Jeff's success was that they understood and accepted that men are like rubber bands.

HOW WOMEN MISINTERPRET MEN

Without an understanding of how men are like rubber bands, it is very easy for women to misinterpret a man's reactions. A common confusion arises when she says "Let's talk" and immediately he emotionally distances himself. Right when she wants to open up and get closer, he wants to pull away. Commonly I hear the complaint "Every time I want to talk, he pulls away. I feel like he doesn't care about me." She mistakenly concludes that he doesn't *ever* want to talk to her.

This rubber band analogy explains how a man may care very much about his partner but suddenly pull away. When he pulls away it is not because he does not want to talk. Instead, he needs some time alone; time to be with himself when he is not responsible for anyone else. It is a time for him to take care of himself. When he returns then he is available to talk.

To a certain extent a man *loses* himself through connecting with his partner. By feeling her needs, problems, wants, and emotions he may lose touch with his own sense of self. Pulling away allows him to reestablish his personal boundaries and fulfill his need to feel autonomous.

To a certain extent a man *loses* himself through connecting with his partner.

Some men, however, may describe this pulling away differently. To them it is just a feeling of "I need some space" or "I need to be alone." Regardless of how it is described, when a man pulls away, he is fulfilling a valid need to take care of himself for a while.

Just as we do not *decide* to be hungry, a man does not decide to pull away. It is an instinctual urge. He can only get so close, and then he begins to lose himself. At this point he begins to feel his need for autonomy and begins to pull away. By understanding this process, women can begin correctly to interpret this pulling away.

Why Men Pull Away When Women Get Close

For many women, a man tends to pull away precisely at the time when she wants to talk and be intimate. This occurs for two reasons:

1.A woman will unconsciously sense when a man is pulling away and precisely at those times she will attempt to reestablish their intimate connection and say "Let's talk." As he continues to

pull away, she mistakenly concludes that he doesn't want to talk or that he doesn't care for her.

2. When a woman opens up and shares deeper and more intimate feelings it may actually trigger a man's need to pull away. A man can only handle so much intimacy before his alarm bells go off, saying it is time to find balance by pulling away. At the most intimate moments a man may suddenly automatically switch to feeling his need for autonomy and pull away.

It is very confusing for a woman when a man pulls away because something she says or does often triggers his departure. Generally when a woman starts to talk about things with *feeling* a man starts to feel this urge to pull away. This is because feelings draw men closer and create intimacy, and when a man gets too close he automatically pulls away.

It is not that he doesn't want to hear her feelings. At another time in his intimacy cycle, when he is needing to get close, the same *feelings* that could have triggered his departure will draw him closer. It is not *what* she says that triggers his departure but *when* she says it.

WHEN TO TALK WITH A MAN

When a man is pulling away is not the time to talk or try to get closer. Let him pull away. After some time, he will return. He will appear loving and supportive and will act as though nothing has happened. *This is the time to talk.*

At this golden time, when a man wants intimacy and is actually available to talk, women generally don't initiate conversations. This occurs for these three common reasons:

1.A woman is afraid to talk because the last time she wanted to talk he pulled away. She mistakenly assumes that he doesn't care and he doesn't want to listen.

2. A woman is afraid the man is upset with her and she waits for him to initiate a conversation about his feelings. She knows that if she were suddenly to pull away from him, before she could reconnect she would need to talk about what happened. She waits for him to initiate a conversation about what upset him. He, however, doesn't need to talk about his upset feelings because he is not upset.

3. A woman has so much to say that she doesn't want to be rude and just begin talking. To be polite, instead of talking about *her own* thoughts and feelings she makes the mistake of asking him questions about *his* feelings and thoughts. When he has nothing to say, she concludes he doesn't want to have a conversation with her.

With all of these incorrect beliefs about why a man is not talking, it is no wonder that women are frustrated with men.

HOW TO GET A MAN TO TALK

When a woman wants to talk or feels the need to get close, she should do the talking and not expect a man to initiate the conversation. To initiate a conversation she needs to be the first to begin sharing,

even if her partner has little to say. As she appreciates him for listening, gradually he will have more to say.

A man can be very open to having a conversation with a woman but at first have nothing to say. What women don't know about Martians is that they need to have a reason to talk. They don't talk just for the sake of sharing. But when a woman talks for a while, a man will start to open up and share how he relates to what she has shared.

For example, if she talks about some of her difficulties during the day he may share some of the difficulties of his day so that they can understand each other. If she talks about her feelings about the kids, he may then talk about his feelings about the kids. As she opens up and he doesn't feel blamed or pressured, then he gradually begins to open up.

How Women Pressure Men to Talk

A woman sharing her thoughts naturally motivates a man to talk. But when he feels a demand is being made that he talk, his mind goes blank. He has nothing to say. Even if he has something to say he will resist because he feels her demand.

It is hard for a man when a woman demands that *he* talk. She unknowingly turns him off by interrogating him. Especially when he doesn't feel the need to talk. A woman mistakenly assumes that a man "needs to talk" and therefore "should." She forgets that he is from Mars and doesn't feel the need to talk as much.

She even feels that unless *he* talks, he doesn't love her. To reject a man for not talking is to ensure that he has nothing to say. A man needs to feel accepted just the way he is, and then he will gradually open up. He does not feel accepted when she wants him to talk more or resents him for pulling away.

A man who needs to pull away a lot before he can learn to share and open up will first need to listen a lot. He needs to be appreciated for listening, then gradually he will say more.

How to Initiate a Conversation with a Man

The more a woman tries to get a man to talk the more he will resist. Directly trying to get him to talk is not the best approach, especially if he is stretching away. Instead of wondering how she can get him to talk a better question might be "How can I achieve greater intimacy, conversation, and communication with my partner?"

If a woman feels the need for more talk in the relationship, and most women do, then she can initiate more conversation but with a mature awareness that not only accepts but also expects that sometimes he will be available and at other times he will instinctively pull away.

When he is available, instead of asking him twenty questions or demanding that he talk, she could let him know that she appreciates him even if he just listens. In the beginning she should even discourage him from talking.

For example, Maggie could say "Jeff, would you listen to me for a while? I've had a hard day and I want to talk about it. It will make me feel much better." After Maggie talked for a couple of minutes then she could pause and say "I really appreciate when you listen to my feelings, it means a lot to me." This appreciation encourages a man to listen more.

Without appreciation and encouragement, a man may lose interest because he feels as though his "listening" is "doing nothing." He doesn't realize how valuable his listening is to her. Most women, however, instinctively know how important listening is. To expect a man to know this without some training is to expect him to be like a woman. Fortunately, after being appreciated for listening to a woman, a man does learn to respect the value of talking.

WHEN A MAN WON'T TALK

> Sandra and Larry had been married for twenty years. Sandra wanted a divorce and Larry wanted to make things work.
>
> She said, "How can he say he wants to stay married? He doesn't love me. He doesn't feel anything. He walks away when I need him to talk. He is cold and heartless. For twenty years he has withheld his feelings. I am not willing to forgive him. I will not stay in this marriage. I am too tired of trying to get him to open up and share his feelings and be vulnerable."

Sandra didn't know how she had contributed to their problems. She thought it was all her husband's fault. She thought she had done everything to promote intimacy, conversation, and communication, and he had resisted her for twenty years.

After hearing about men and rubber bands in the seminar, she burst into tears of forgiveness for her husband. She realized that "his" problem was "their" problem. She recognized how she had contributed to their problem.

She said, "I remember in our first year of marriage I would open up, talk about my feelings, and he would just walk away. I thought he didn't love me. After that happened a few times, I gave up. I was not willing to be hurt again. I did not know that at another time he would be able to listen to my feelings. I didn't give him a chance. I stopped being vulnerable. I wanted him to open up before I would."

One-Sided Conversations

Sandra's conversations were generally one-sided. She would try to get him to talk first by asking him a string of questions. Then, before she could share what she wanted to talk about, she would become upset with his short answers. When she finally did share her feelings, they were always the same. She was upset that he was not open, loving, and sharing. A one-sided conversation might go like this:

SANDRA: How was your day?
LARRY: OK.
SANDRA: What happened?
LARRY: The usual.
SANDRA: What do you feel like doing this weekend?
LARRY: I don't care. What do you want to do?
SANDRA: Do you want to invite our friends over?

LARRY: I don't know … Do you know where the TV schedule is?

SANDRA: *(upset)* Why don't you talk to me?

LARRY: *(Stunned and silent.)*

SANDRA: Do you love me?

LARRY: Of course I love you. I married you.

SANDRA: How could you love me? We never talk anymore. How can you just sit there and say nothing. Don't you care?

At this point, Larry would get up and go for a walk. When he came back he would act as though nothing had happened. Sandra would also act as though everything was fine, but inside she would withdraw her love and warmth. On the surface she would try to be loving, but on the inside her resentment increased. From time to time it would boil up and she would begin another one-sided interrogation of her husband's feelings. After twenty years of gathering evidence that he did not love her, she was no longer willing to be deprived of intimacy.

Learning to Support Each Other Without Having to Change

At the seminar Sandra said, "I have spent twenty years trying to get Larry to talk. I wanted him to open up and be vulnerable. I didn't realize that what I was missing was a man who would support *me* in being open and vulnerable. That is what I really needed. I have shared more intimate feelings with my husband this weekend than in twenty years. I feel so loved. This is what I have been missing. I thought he had to change. Now I know nothing is wrong with him or me. We just didn't know how to support each other."

Sandra had always complained that Larry didn't talk. She had convinced herself that his silence made intimacy impossible. At the seminar she learned to share her feelings without expecting or demanding Larry to reciprocate. Instead of rejecting his silence she learned to appreciate it. It made him a better listener.

Larry learned the art of listening. He practiced listening without trying to fix her. It is much more effective to teach a man to listen than to open up and be vulnerable. As he learns to listen to someone he cares for and is appreciated in response, he gradually will open up and share more automatically.

When a man feels appreciated for listening and he doesn't feel rejected for not sharing more, he will gradually begin to open up. When he feels as though he doesn't have to talk more, then naturally he will. But first he needs to feel accepted. If she is still frustrated by his silence she is forgetting that men are from Mars!

WHEN A MAN DOESN'T PULL AWAY

Lisa and Jim had been married for two years. They did everything together. They were never apart. After a while, Jim became increasingly irritable, passive, moody, and temperamental.

In a private counseling session, Lisa told me, "He is no longer any fun to be with. I have tried everything to cheer him up, but it doesn't work. I want to do fun things together, like going to

restaurants, shopping, traveling, going to plays, parties, and dancing, but he doesn't. We never do anything anymore. We just watch TV, eat, sleep, and work. I try to love him, but I am angry. He used to be so charming and romantic. Living with him now is like living with a slug. I don't know what to do. He just won't budge!"

After learning about the male intimacy cycle—the rubber band theory—both Lisa and Jim realized what had happened. They were spending too much time together. Jim and Lisa needed to spend more time apart.

When a man gets too close and doesn't pull away, common symptoms are increased moodiness, irritability, passiveness, and defensiveness. Jim had not learned how to pull away. He felt guilty spending time alone. He thought he was supposed to share everything with his wife.

Lisa also thought they were supposed to do everything together. In counseling I asked Lisa why she had spent so much time with Jim.

She said, "I was afraid he would get upset if I did anything fun without him. One time I went shopping and he got really upset with me."

Jim said, "I remember that day. But I wasn't upset with you. I was upset about losing some money in a business deal. I actually remember that day because I remember noticing how good I felt having the whole house to myself. I didn't dare tell you that because I thought it would hurt your feelings."

Lisa said, "I thought you didn't want me to go out without you. You seemed so distant."

Becoming More Independent

With this new awareness, Lisa got the permission she needed not to worry so much about Jim. Jim pulling away actually helped her become more autonomous and independent. She started taking better care of herself. As she started doing the things she wanted to do and getting more support from her girlfriends she was much happier.

She released her resentment toward Jim. She realized that she had been expecting too much from him. Having heard about the rubber band she realized how she was contributing to their problem. She realized that he needed more time to be alone. Her loving sacrifices were not only preventing him from pulling away and then springing back but her dependent attitude was also smothering him.

Lisa started doing fun things without Jim. She did some of the things that she had been wanting to do. One night she went out to eat with some girlfriends. Another night she went to a play. Another night she went to a birthday bowling party.

Simple Miracles

What amazed her was how quickly their relationship changed. Jim became much more attentive and interested in her. Within a couple of weeks, Jim started to come back to his old self again. He was wanting to do fun things with her and started planning dates. He got his motivation back.

In counseling he said, "I feel so relieved. I feel loved… when Lisa comes home she is happy to see me. It feels so good to miss her when she is gone. It feels good to 'feel' again. I had almost forgotten what it was like. Before it seemed like nothing I did was good enough. Lisa was always trying to get

me to do things, telling me what to do and asking me questions."

Lisa said, "I realized I was blaming him for my unhappiness. As I took responsibility for my happiness, I experienced that Jim was more energetic and alive. It's like a miracle."

OBSTRUCTING THE INTIMACY CYCLE

There are two ways a woman may unknowingly obstruct her male partner's natural intimacy cycle. They are: (1) chasing him when he pulls away; and (2) punishing him for pulling away.

The following is a list of the most common ways a woman "chases a man" and prevents him from pulling away.

Chasing Behaviors

1. Physical

When he pulls away, she physically follows him. He may walk into another room and she follows. Or as in the example of Lisa and Jim, she does not do the things she wants to do so that she can be with her partner.

2. Emotional

When he pulls away, she emotionally follows him. She worries about him. She wants to help him feel better. She feels sorry for him. She smothers him with attention and praise.

Another way she may emotionally stop him from pulling away is to disapprove of his need to be alone. Through disapproving she is also emotionally pulling him back.

Another approach is to look longingly or hurt when he pulls away. In this way she pleads for his intimacy and he feels controlled.

3. Mental

She may try to pull him back mentally by asking him guilt-inducing questions such as "How could you treat me this way?" or "What's wrong with you?" or "Don't you realize how much it hurts me when you pull away?"

Another way she may try to pull him back is to try to please him. She becomes overly accommodating. She tries to be perfect so he would never have any reason to pull away. She gives up her sense of self and tries to become what she thinks he wants.

She is afraid to rock the boat for fear that he might pull away, and so she withholds her true feelings and avoids doing anything that may upset him.

The second major way a woman may unknowingly interrupt a man's intimacy cycle is to punish him for pulling away. The following is a list of the most common ways a woman "punishes a man" and prevents him from coming back and opening up to her.

Punishing Behaviors

1. Physical

When he begins to desire her again she rejects him. She pushes away his physical affection. She may reject him sexually. She doesn't allow him to touch her or be close. She may hit him or break things in order to show her displeasure.

When a man is punished for pulling away, he can become afraid of ever doing it again. This fear may prevent him from pulling away in the future. His natural cycle is then broken. It may also create an anger that blocks him from feeling his desire for intimacy. He may not come back when he has pulled away.

2. Emotional

When he returns, she is unhappy and she blames him. She does not forgive him for neglecting her. There is nothing he can do to please her or make her happy. He feels incapable of fulfilling her and gives up.

When he returns, she expresses her disapproval through words, tone of voice, and by looking at her partner in a certain wounded way.

3. Mental

When he returns, she refuses to open up and share her feelings. She becomes cold and resents him for not opening up and talking.

She stops trusting that he really cares and punishes him by not giving him a chance to listen and be the "good" guy. When he happily returns to her, he is in the doghouse.

> When a man feels punished for pulling away, he can become afraid of losing her love if he pulls away. He begins to feel unworthy of her love if he pulls away. He may become afraid to reach out for her love again because he feels unworthy; he assumes he will be rejected. This fear of rejection prevents him from coming back from his journey into the cave.

HOW A MAN'S PAST MAY AFFECT HIS INTIMACY CYCLE

This natural cycle in a man may already be obstructed from his childhood. He may be afraid to pull away because he witnessed his mother's disapproval of his father's emotional distancing. Such a man may not even know that he needs to pull away. He may unconsciously create arguments to justify pulling away.

This kind of man naturally develops more of his feminine side but at the expense of suppressing some of his masculine power. He is a sensitive man. He tries hard to please and be loving but loses part of his masculine self in the process. He feels guilty pulling away. Without knowing what has happened he loses his desire, power, and passion; he becomes passive or overly dependent.

He may be afraid to be alone or to go into his cave. He may think he doesn't like being alone because deep inside he is afraid of losing love. He has already experienced in childhood his mother rejecting his father or directly rejecting him.

While some men don't know how to pull away, others don't know how to get close. The macho man has no problem pulling away. He just can't come back and open up. Deep inside he may be

afraid he is unworthy of love. He is afraid of being close and caring a lot. He does not have a picture of how welcomed he would be if he got closer. Both the sensitive male and the macho male are missing a positive picture or experience of their natural intimacy cycle.

Understanding this male intimacy cycle is just as important for men as it is for women. Some men feel guilty needing to spend time in their caves or they may get confused when they start to pull away and then later spring back. They may mistakenly think something is wrong with them. It is such a relief for both men and women to understand these secrets about men.

WISE MEN AND WOMEN

Men generally don't realize how their suddenly pulling away and then later returning affects women. With this new insight about how women are affected by his intimacy cycle, a man can recognize the importance of sincerely listening when a woman speaks. He understands and respects her need to be reassured that he is interested in her and he does care. Whenever he is not needing to pull away, the wise man takes the time to initiate conversation by asking his female partner how she is feeling.

He grows to understand his own cycles and reassures her when he pulls away that he will be back. He might say "I need some time to be alone and then we will have some special time together with no distractions." Or if he starts to pull away while she is talking he might say "I need some time to think about this and then we can talk again."

The man grows to understand his own cycles and reassures her when he pulls away that he will be back.

When he returns to talk, she might probe him to understand why he left. If he's not sure, which is many times the case, he might say "I'm not sure. I just needed some time to myself. But let's continue our conversation."

He is more aware that she needs to be heard and he needs to listen more when he is not pulling away. In addition, he knows that listening helps him to become aware of what he wants to share in a conversation.

To initiate a conversation the wise woman learns not to demand that a man talk but asks that he truly listen to her. As her emphasis changes, the pressure on him is released. She learns to open up and share her feelings without demanding that he do the same.

She trusts that he will gradually open up more as he feels accepted and listens to her feelings. She does not punish him or chase after him. She understands that sometimes her intimate feelings trigger his need to pull away while at other times (when he is on his way back) he *is* quite capable of hearing her intimate feelings. This wise woman does not give up. She patiently and lovingly persists with a knowing that few women have.

7

Women Are Like Waves

A woman is like a wave. When she feels loved her self-esteem rises and falls in a wave motion. When she is feeling really good, she will reach a peak, but then suddenly her mood may change and her wave crashes down. This crash is temporary. After she reaches bottom suddenly her mood will shift and she will again feel good about herself. Automatically her wave begins to rise back up.

When a woman's wave rises she feels she has an abundance of love to give, but when it falls she feels her inner emptiness and needs to be filled up with love. This time of bottoming out is a time for emotional housecleaning.

If she has suppressed any negative feelings or denied herself in order to be more loving on the upswing of her wave, then on the downswing she begins to experience these negative feelings and unfulfilled needs. During this down time she especially needs to talk about problems and be heard and understood.

My wife, Bonnie, says this experience of "going down" is like going down into a dark well. When a woman goes into her "well" she is consciously sinking into her unconscious self, into darkness and diffused feeling. She may suddenly experience a host of unexplained emotions and vague feelings. She may feel hopeless, thinking she is all alone or unsupported. But soon after she reaches the bottom, if she feels loved and supported, she will automatically start to feel better. As suddenly as she may have crashed, she will automatically rise up and again radiate love in her relationships.

A woman's self-esteem rises and falls like a wave. When she hits bottom it is a time for emotional housecleaning.

A woman's ability to give and receive love in her relationships is generally a reflection of how she is feeling about herself. When she is not feeling *as* good about herself, she is unable to be *as* accepting and appreciative of her partner. At her down times, she tends to be overwhelmed or more emotionally reactive. When her wave hits bottom she is more vulnerable and needs more love. It is crucial that her partner understand what she needs at these times, otherwise he may make unreasonable demands.

HOW MEN REACT TO THE WAVE

When a man loves a woman she begins to shine with love and fulfillment. Most men naïvely expect

that shine to last forever. But to expect her loving nature to be constant is like expecting the weather never to change and the sun to shine all the time. Life is filled with rhythms—day and night, hot and cold, summer and winter, spring and fall, cloudy and clear. Likewise in a relationship, men and women have their own rhythms and cycles. Men pull back and then get close, while women rise and fall in their ability to love themselves and others.

In relationships, men pull back and then get close, while women rise and fall in their ability to love themselves and others.

A man assumes that her sudden change of mood is based solely on his behavior. When she is happy he takes credit, but when she is unhappy he also feels responsible. He may feel extremely frustrated because he doesn't know how to make things better. One minute she seems happy, and so he believes he is doing a good job and then the next minute she is unhappy. He is shocked because he thought he was doing so well.

Don't Try to Fix It

Bill and Mary had been married for six years. Bill had observed this wave pattern in Mary, but because he didn't understand it, he tried to "fix it," which just made matters worse. He thought something was wrong with her tendency to go up and down. He would try explaining to her that she didn't need to be upset. Mary only felt more misunderstood and thus more distressed.

Although he thought he was "fixing it," he was actually preventing her from feeling better. When a woman moves into her well, he needs to learn that this is when she needs him the most, and it is not a problem to be solved or fixed, but an opportunity to support her with unconditional love.

> Bill said, "I can't understand my wife, Mary. For weeks she is the most wonderful woman. She gives her love so unconditionally to me and to everyone. Then suddenly she becomes overwhelmed by how much she is doing for everyone and starts being disapproving of me. It's not my fault she's unhappy. I explain that to her, and we just get into the biggest fights."

Like many men, Bill made the mistake of trying to prevent his partner from "going down" or "bottoming out." He tried to rescue her by pulling her up. He had not learned that when his wife was going down she needed to hit bottom before she could come up.

When his wife, Mary, started to crash, her first symptom was to feel overwhelmed. Instead of listening to her with caring, warmth, and empathy, he would try to bring her back up with explanations of why she shouldn't be so upset.

The last thing a woman needs when she is on her way down is someone telling her why she shouldn't be down. What she needs is someone to be with her as she goes down, to listen to her while she shares her feelings, and to empathize with what she is going through. Even if a man can't fully

understand why a woman feels overwhelmed, he can offer his love, attention, and support.

How Men Are Confused

After learning how women are like waves, Bill was still confused. The next time his wife seemed to be in her well, he practiced listening to her. As she talked about some of the things that were bothering her, he practiced not offering suggestions to "fix her" or make her feel better. After about twenty minutes he became very upset, because she wasn't feeling any better.

He told me, "At first I listened, and she seemed to open up and share more. But then she started getting even more upset. It seemed the more I listened the more upset she got. I told her she shouldn't be getting more upset and then we got into a big argument."

Although Bill was listening to Mary, he was still trying to fix her. He expected her to feel better right away. What Bill didn't know is that when a woman goes into her well, if she feels supported she doesn't necessarily feel better right away. She may feel worse. But that is a sign that his support may be helping. His support may actually help her to hit bottom sooner, and then she can and will feel better. To genuinely come up she first needs to hit bottom. That is the cycle.

Bill was confused, because as he listened to her she appeared to get no benefit from his support. To him she just seemed to be going deeper. To avoid this confusion a man needs to remember that sometimes when he is succeeding in supporting a woman she may become even more upset. Through understanding that a wave must hit bottom before it can rise again he can release his expectations that she immediately feel better in response to his assistance.

Even when a man is succeeding in supporting a woman she may become even more upset.

With this new insight, Bill was able to be more understanding and patient with Mary. After becoming much more successful in supporting Mary in her well, he also learned that there was no way to predict how long she would be upset; sometimes her well was deeper than at other times.

RECURRING CONVERSATIONS AND ARGUMENTS

When a woman comes out of the well she becomes her usual loving self again. This positive shift is generally misunderstood by men. A man typically thinks that whatever was bothering her is now completely healed or resolved. This is not the case. It is an illusion. Because she is suddenly more loving and positive he mistakenly thinks all her issues are resolved.

When her wave crashes again, similar issues will arise. When her issues come up again he becomes impatient, because he thinks they have already been resolved. Without understanding the wave, he finds it hard to validate and nurture her feelings while she is in the "well."

When a woman's unresolved feelings recur, he may respond inappropriately by saying

1. “How many times do we have to go through this?”
2. “I’ve heard all this before.”
3. “I thought we had established that.”
4. “When are you going to get off it?”
5. “I don’t want to deal with this again.”
6. “This is crazy! We are having the same argument.”
7. “Why do you have so many problems?”

When a woman goes into her well her deepest issues tend to surface. These issues may have to do with the relationship, but usually they are heavily charged from her past relationships and childhood. Whatever remains to be healed or resolved from her past inevitably will come up. Here are some of the common feelings she may experience as she goes into the well.

Warning Signs for Men That She May Be Going into Her Well or When She Needs His Love the Most

Shee feels: Overwhelmed
She may say: “There is so much to do.”
Shee feels: Insecure
She may say: “I need more.”
Shee feels: Resentful
She may say: “I do everything.”
Shee feels: Worried
She may say: “But what about …”
Shee feels: Confused
She may say: “I don’t understand why …”
Shee feels: Exhausted
She may say: “I can’t do anything more.”
Shee feels: Hopeless
She may say: “I don’t know what to do.”
Shee feels: Passive
She may say: “I don’t care, do what you want.”
Shee feels: Demanding
She may say: “You should …”
Shee feels: Withholding
She may say: “No, I don’t want to …”
Shee feels: Mistrustful

She may say: "What do you mean by that?"

Shee feels: Controlling

She may say: "Well, did you …?"

Shee feels: Disapproving

She may say: "How could you forget …?"

As she feels more and more supported at these difficult times, she begins to trust the relationship and is able to journey in and out of her well without conflict in her relationship or struggle in her life. This is the blessing of a loving relationship.

To support a woman when she is in her well is a special gift that she will greatly appreciate. Gradually she will become free from the gripping influence of her past. She will still have her ups and downs, but they will not be so extreme that they overshadow her loving nature.

UNDERSTANDING NEEDINESS

> During my relationship seminar Tom complained, saying, "In the beginning of our relationship, Susan seemed so strong, but then suddenly she became so needy. I remember reassuring her that I loved her and that she was important to me. After a lot of talking we got over that hurdle, but then again a month later she went through the same insecurity. It was as if she had never heard me the first time. I became so frustrated with her that we got in a big argument."

Tom was surprised to see that many other men shared his experience in their relationships. When Tom met Susan she was on the upswing of her wave. As their relationship progressed Susan's love for Tom grew. After her wave peaked, suddenly she started feeling very needy and possessive. She became insecure and demanded more attention.

This was the beginning of her descent into the well. Tom could not understand why she had changed, but after a rather intense discussion that went on for hours, Susan felt much better. Tom had reassured her of his love and support, and Susan was now swinging up again. Inside he felt relieved.

After this interaction Tom thought he had successfully solved this problem in their relationship. But a month later Susan began to crash and began feeling the same way again. This time Tom was much less understanding and accepting of her. He became impatient. He was insulted that she would mistrust him again after he had reassured her of his love a month before. In his defensiveness he negatively judged her recurring need for reassurance. As a result they argued.

Reassuring Insights

By understanding how women are like waves, Tom realized that the recurrence of Susan's neediness and insecurity was natural, inevitable, and temporary. He realized how naïve he had been to think that his loving response to Susan's deepest core issues could permanently heal her.

Tom learning successfully to support Susan when she was in her well not only made it easier for her to do her inner healing but also helped them not to have fights at those times. Tom was encouraged

by the three following realizations:

1. A man's love and support cannot instantly resolve a woman's issues. His love, however, can make it safe for her to go deeper into her well. It is naïve to expect a woman to be perfectly loving all the time. He can expect these issues to come up again and again. Each time, however, he can get better at supporting her.

2. A woman going into her well is not a man's fault or his failure. By being more supportive he *cannot* prevent it from happening, but he can help her through these difficult times.

3. A woman has within herself the ability to spontaneously rise up after she has hit bottom. A man does not have to fix her. She is not broken but just needs his love, patience, and understanding.

WHEN A WOMAN DOESN'T FEEL SAFE IN HER WELL

This tendency to be like a wave increases when a woman is in an intimate relationship. It is essential that she feel safe to go through this cycle. Otherwise she works hard at pretending that everything is always all right and suppresses her negative feelings.

When a woman doesn't feel safe to go into her well, her only alternative is to avoid intimacy and sex or to suppress and numb her feelings through addictions like drinking, overeating, overworking, or overcaretaking. Even with her addictions, however, she periodically will fall into her well and her feelings may come up in a most uncontrolled fashion.

You probably know stories of couples who never fight or argue and then suddenly to everyone's surprise they decide to get a divorce. In many of these cases, the woman has suppressed her negative feelings to avoid having fights. As a result she becomes numb and unable to feel her love.

When negative feelings are suppressed positive feelings become suppressed as well, and love dies. Avoiding arguments and fights certainly is healthy but not by suppressing feelings. In chapter 9 we will explore how to avoid arguments without suppressing feelings.

When negative feelings are suppressed positive feelings become suppressed as well, and love dies.

Emotional Housecleaning

When a woman's wave crashes is a time of emotional cleansing or emotional housecleaning. Without this cleansing or emotional catharsis a woman slowly loses her ability to love and to grow in love. Through controlled repression of her feelings her wave nature is obstructed, and she gradually becomes unfeeling and passionless over time.

Some women who avoid dealing with their negative emotions and resist the natural wave motion of their feelings experience premenstrual syndrome (PMS). There is a strong correlation between PMS and the inability to cope with negative feelings in a positive way. In some cases women who have learned successfully to deal with their feelings have felt their PMS symptoms disappear. In chapter 11 we will explore more healing techniques for dealing with negative emotions.

Even a strong, confident, and successful woman will need to visit her well from time to time. Men commonly make the mistake of thinking that if their female partner is successful in the work world then she will not experience these times of emotional housecleaning. The opposite is true.

When a woman is in the work world she generally is exposed to stress and emotional pollution. Her need for emotional housecleaning becomes great. Similarly, a man's need to pull away like a rubber band may increase when he is under a greater amount of stress at work.

One study revealed that a woman's self-esteem generally rises and falls in a cycle between twenty-one and thirty-five days. No studies have been done on how often a man pulls back like a rubber band, but my experience is that it is about the same. A woman's self-esteem cycle is not necessarily in sync with her menstrual cycle, but it does average out at twenty-eight days.

When a woman puts on her business suit she can detach from this emotional roller coaster, but when she returns home she needs her partner to give the tender loving support that every woman needs and appreciates at these times.

It is important to recognize that this tendency to go into the well does not necessarily affect a woman's competence at work, but it does greatly influence her communication with the people she intimately loves and needs.

How a Man Can Support a Woman in the Well

A wise man learns to go out of his way to help a woman feel safe to rise and fall. He releases his judgments and demands and learns how to give the required support. As a result he enjoys a relationship that increases in love and passion over the years.

He may have to weather a few emotional storms or droughts, but the reward is much greater. The uninitiated man still suffers from storms and droughts, but because he does not know the art of loving her through her time in the well, their love stops growing and gradually becomes repressed.

WHEN SHE'S IN THE WELL AND HE'S IN THE CAVE

> Harris said, "I tried everything I learned in the seminar. It was really working. We were so close. I felt like I was in heaven. Then suddenly my wife, Cathy, started complaining that I watched too much TV. She started treating me like I was a child. We got in a huge argument. I don't know what happened. We were doing so well."

This is an example of what can happen when the wave and the rubber band occur around the same time. After taking the seminar, Harris had succeeded in giving more to his wife and family than ever. Cathy was delighted. She couldn't believe it. They had become closer than ever. Her wave was peaking. This lasted for a couple of weeks, and then Harris decided to stay up late one night and

watch TV. His rubber band was starting to droop. He needed to pull away into his cave.

When he pulled away, Cathy was greatly hurt. Her wave began to crash. She saw his pulling away as the end of her new experience of intimacy. The previous couple of weeks had been everything she had wanted, and now she thought she was going to lose it. Ever since she was a little girl this type of intimacy was her dream. His pulling away was a tremendous shock to her. To the vulnerable little girl within her it was an experience of giving candy to a baby and then taking it away. She became very upset.

Martian and Venusian Logic

Cathy's experience of abandonment is hard for a Martian to understand. Martian logic says "I have been so wonderful for the past two weeks. Shouldn't that entitle me to a little time off? I have been giving to you all this time, now it's time for me. You should be more secure and reassured about my love than ever."

Venusian logic approaches the experience differently: "These last two weeks have been so wonderful. I have let myself open up to you more than ever. Losing your loving attention is more painful than ever. I started to really open up and then you pulled away."

How Past Feelings Come Up

By not fully trusting and opening up, Cathy had spent years protecting herself from being hurt. But during their two weeks of living in love she started to open up more than she ever had in her adult life. Harris's support had made it safe for her to get in touch with her old feelings.

Suddenly she began to feel the way she felt as a child when her father was too busy for her. Her past unresolved feelings of anger and powerlessness were projected onto Harris's watching TV. If these feelings had not come up, Cathy would have been able gracefully to accept Harris's wish to watch TV.

Because her past feelings were coming up, she felt hurt when he watched TV. If given the chance to share and explore her hurt, deep feelings would have emerged. Cathy would have hit bottom, and then she would have felt significantly better. Once again, she would have been willing to trust intimacy, even knowing it can be painful when inevitably he temporarily pulls away.

When Feelings Get Hurt

But Harris didn't understand why she would be hurt. He told her she shouldn't be hurt. And the argument began. Telling a woman she shouldn't feel hurt is about the worst thing a man can say. It hurts her even more, like poking a stick into an open wound.

When a woman is feeling hurt, she may sound as if she is blaming him. But if she is given care and understanding, the blame will disappear. Trying to explain to her why she shouldn't be hurt will make matters much worse.

Sometimes when a woman is hurting she may even agree intellectually that she shouldn't be hurting. But emotionally she is still hurting and doesn't want to hear from him that she shouldn't be hurting.

What she needs is his understanding of why she is hurting.

Why Men and Women Fight

Harris completely misunderstood Cathy's hurt reaction. He thought she was demanding that he give up TV forever. Cathy wasn't demanding that Harris give up TV. She just wanted him to know how painful it was for her.

Women instinctively know that if only their pain can be heard then they can trust their partner to make whatever changes he can make. When Cathy shared her hurt, she just needed to be heard and then be reassured that he wasn't permanently reverting back to the old Harris, addicted to TV and emotionally unavailable.

Certainly Harris deserved to watch TV, but Cathy deserved the right to be upset. She deserved to be heard, understood, and reassured. Harris was not wrong for watching TV, and Cathy was not wrong for being upset.

Men argue for the right to be free while women argue for the right to be upset. Men want space while women want understanding.

Because Harris did not understand Cathy's wave, he thought her reaction was unfair. He thought he had to invalidate her feelings if he wanted to take time to watch TV. He became irritable and thought, I can't be loving and intimate all the time!

Harris felt he had to make her feelings wrong to gain the right to watch TV and live his life and be himself. He argued for his right to watch TV when Cathy just needed to be heard. She argued for the right to be hurt and upset.

RESOLVING CONFLICTS THROUGH UNDERSTANDING

It was naïve for Harris to think that Cathy's anger, resentment, and feelings of powerlessness from being neglected for twelve years were going to go away after two weeks of being in love.

It was equally naïve for Cathy to think that Harris could sustain his focus on her and the family without taking time to pull away and focus on himself.

When Harris started to pull away it triggered Cathy's wave to crash. Her unresolved feelings started coming up. She was not just reacting to Harris watching TV that night but to the years of being neglected. Their argument turned into yelling. After two hours of yelling they weren't talking to each other.

By understanding the bigger picture of what had happened, they were able to resolve their conflict and make up. Harris understood that when he started to pull away it triggered Cathy's time to do some emotional housecleaning. She needed to talk about her feelings and not be made wrong. Harris was

encouraged by the realization that she was fighting to be heard, just as he was fighting to be free. He learned that by supporting her need to be heard she could support his need to be free.

By supporting her need to be heard she could support his need to be free.

Cathy understood that Harris did not mean to invalidate her hurt feelings. In addition she understood that though he was pulling away he would be back and they would be able to experience intimacy again. She realized that their increased intimacy had triggered his need to pull away. She learned that her hurt feelings made him feel controlled, and he needed to feel she was not trying to tell him what he could do.

What a Man Can Do When He Can't Listen

Harris asked, "What if I just can't listen and I need to be in my cave? Sometimes, I start to listen and I become furious."

I assured him that this is normal. When her wave crashes and she needs to be heard the most, sometimes his rubber band is triggered and he needs to pull away. He cannot give her what she needs. He emphatically agreed and said, "Yes, that's right. When I want to pull away, she wants to talk."

When a man needs to pull away and a woman needs to talk, his trying to listen only makes matters worse. After a short time he either will be judging her and possibly explode with anger or he will become incredibly tired or distracted, and she will become more upset. When he is not capable of listening attentively with caring, understanding, and respect, these three actions can help:

Three Steps for Supporting Her When He Needs to Pull Away

1. Accept Your Limitations

The first thing you need to do is accept that you need to pull away and have nothing to give. No matter how loving you want to be, you cannot listen attentively. Don't try to listen when you can't.

2. Understand Her Pain

Next, you need to understand that she needs more than you can give at this moment. Her pain is valid. Don't make her wrong for needing more or for being hurt. It hurts to be abandoned when she needs your love. You are not wrong for needing space, and she is not wrong for wanting to be close. You may be afraid that she will not forgive you or trust. She can be more trusting and forgiving if you are caring and understanding of her hurt.

3. Avoid Arguing and Give Reassurance

By understanding her hurt you won't make her wrong for being upset and in pain. Although you can't give the support she wants and needs, you can avoid making it worse by arguing. Reassure her that

you will be back, and then you will be able to give her the support she deserves.

What He Can Say Instead of Arguing

There was nothing wrong with Harris's need to be alone or watch TV, nor was there anything wrong with Cathy's hurt feelings. Instead of arguing for his right to watch TV, he could have told her something like this: "I understand you're upset, and right now I really need to watch TV and relax. When I feel better we can talk." This would give him time to watch TV as well as an opportunity to cool off and prepare himself to listen to his partner's hurt without making her hurt feelings wrong.

She may not like this response, but she will respect it. Of course she wants him to be his usual loving self, but if he needs to pull away, then that is his valid need. He cannot give what he doesn't have. What he can do is avoid making things worse. The solution lies in respecting his needs as well as hers. He should take the time he needs and then go back and give her what she needs.

When a man can't listen to a woman's hurt feelings because he needs to pull away, he can say "I understand you feel hurt and I need some time to think about it. Let's take a time-out." For a man to excuse himself in this way and stop listening is much better than trying to explain away her hurt.

What She Can Do Instead of Arguing

In hearing this suggestion, Cathy said, "If he gets to be in his cave then what about me? I give him space, but what do I get?"

What Cathy gets is the best her partner can give at the time. By not demanding that he listen to her when she wants to talk, she can avoid making the problem much worse by having a huge argument. Second, she gets his support when he comes back—when he is truly capable of supporting her.

Remember, if a man needs to pull away like a rubber band, when he returns he will be back with a lot more love. Then he can listen. This is the best time to initiate conversation.

Accepting a man's need to go into the cave does not mean giving up the need to talk. It means giving up the demand that he listen whenever she wants to talk. Cathy learned to accept that sometimes a man can't listen or talk and learned that at other times he could. Timing was very important. She was encouraged not to give up initiating conversation but to find those other times when he could listen.

When a man pulls away is the time to get more support from friends. If Cathy feels the need to talk but Harris can't listen, then Cathy could talk more with her friends. It puts too much pressure on a man to make him the only source of love and support. When a woman's wave crashes and her partner is in his cave, it is essential that she have other sources of support. Otherwise she can't help but feel powerless and resent her partner.

It puts too much pressure on a man to make him the only source of love and support.

> Chris said, "I am completely confused. When we got married we were poor. We both worked hard and we barely had enough money for the rent. Sometimes my wife, Pam, would complain about how hard her life was. I could understand it. But now we are rich. We both have successful careers. How can she still be unhappy and complain? Other women would give anything to be in her situation. All we do is fight. We were happier when we were poor; now we want a divorce."

Chris did not understand that women are like waves. When he married Pam, from time to time her wave would crash. At those times he would listen and understand her unhappiness. It was easy for him to validate her negative feelings because he shared them. From his perspective she had a good reason to be upset—they didn't have a lot of money.

Money Doesn't Fulfill Emotional Needs

Martians tend to think money is the solution to all problems. When Chris and Pam were poor and struggling to make ends meet, he would listen and empathize with her pain and resolve to make more money so she wouldn't be unhappy. Pam felt that he really cared.

But as their life improved financially she continued to get upset from time to time. He couldn't understand why she still wasn't happy. He thought she should be happy all the time because they were so rich. Pam felt that he didn't care about her.

Chris did not realize that money could not prevent Pam from being upset. When her wave would crash, they fought because he would invalidate her need to be upset. Ironically, the richer they became the more they fought.

When they were poor, money was the major focus of her pain, but as they became more financially secure she became more aware of what she was not getting emotionally. This progression is natural, normal, and predictable.

As a woman's financial needs are fulfilled she becomes more aware of her emotional needs.

A Wealthy Woman Needs More Permission to Be Upset

I remember reading this quote in an article: "A wealthy woman can only get empathy from a wealthy psychiatrist." When a woman has a lot of money, people (and especially her husband) do not give her the right to be upset. She has no permission to be like a wave and crash from time to time. She has no permission to explore her feelings or to need more in any area of her life.

A woman with money is expected to be fulfilled all the time because her life could be so much worse without this financial abundance. This expectation is not only impractical but disrespectful.

Regardless of wealth, status, privilege, or circumstances, a woman needs permission to be upset and allow her wave to crash.

Chris was encouraged when he realized he could make his wife happy. He remembered he had validated his wife's feelings when they were poor, and he could do it again even if they were rich. Instead of feeling hopeless, he realized he did know how to support her. He had just gotten sidetracked by thinking his money should make her happy when really his caring and understanding of her had been the source of her contentment.

FEELINGS ARE IMPORTANT

If a woman is not supported in being unhappy sometimes then she can never truly be happy. To be genuinely happy requires dipping down into the well to release, heal, and purify the emotions. This is a natural and healthy process.

If we are to feel the positive feelings of love, happiness, trust, and gratitude, we periodically also have to feel anger, sadness, fear, and sorrow. When a woman goes down into her well is when she can heal these negative emotions.

Men also need to process their negative feelings so that they can then experience their positive feelings. When a man goes into his cave is a time when he silently feels and processes his negative feelings. In chapter 11 we will explore a technique for releasing negative feelings that works equally well for women and men.

When a woman is on the upswing she can be fulfilled with what she has. But on the downswing she then will become aware of what she is missing. When she is feeling good she is capable of seeing and responding to the good things in her life. But when she is crashing, her loving vision becomes cloudy, and she reacts more to what is missing in her life.

Just as a glass of water can be viewed as half full or half empty, when a woman is on her way up she sees the fullness of her life. On the way down she sees the emptiness. Whatever emptiness she overlooks on the way up comes more into focus when she is on her way down into her well.

Without learning about how women are like waves men cannot understand or support their wives. They are confused when things get a lot better on the outside but worse in the relationship. By remembering this difference a man holds the key to giving his partner the love she deserves when she needs it the most.

8

Discovering Our Different Emotional Needs

Men and women generally are unaware that they have different emotional needs. As a result they do not instinctively know how to support each other. Men typically give in relationships what men want, while women give what women want. Each mistakenly assumes that the other has the same needs and desires. As a result they both end up dissatisfied and resentful.

Both men and women feel they give and give but do not get back. They feel their love is unacknowledged and unappreciated. The truth is they are both giving love but not in the desired manner.

For example, a woman thinks she is being loving when she asks a lot of caring questions or expresses concern. As we have discussed before, this can be very annoying to a man. He may start to feel controlled and want space. She is confused, because if she were offered this kind of support she would be appreciative. Her efforts to be loving are at best ignored and at worst annoying.

Similarly, men think they are being loving, but the way they express their love may make a woman feel invalidated and unsupported. For example, when a woman gets upset, he thinks he is loving and supporting her by making comments that minimize the importance of her problems. He may say "Don't worry, it's not such a big deal." Or he may completely ignore her, assuming he is giving her a lot of "space" to cool off and go into her cave. What he thinks is support makes her feel minimized, unloved, and ignored.

As we have already discussed, when a woman is upset she needs to be heard and understood. Without this insight into different male and female needs, a man doesn't understand why his attempts to help fail.

THE TWELVE KINDS OF LOVE

Most of our complex emotional needs can be summarized as the need for love. Men and women each have six unique love needs that are all equally important. Men primarily need trust, acceptance, appreciation, admiration, approval, and encouragement. Women primarily need caring, understanding, respect, devotion, validation, and reassurance. The enormous task of figuring out what our partner needs is simplified greatly through understanding these twelve different kinds of love.

By reviewing this list you can easily see why your partner may not feel loved. And most important, this list can give you a direction to improve your relationships with the opposite sex when you don't know what else to do.

The Primary Love Needs of Women and Men

Here are the different kinds of love listed side by side:

Women need to receive: 1. Caring
Men need to receive: 1. Trust
Women need to receive: 2. Understanding
Men need to receive: 2. Acceptance
Women need to receive: 3. Respect
Men need to receive: 3. Appreciation
Women need to receive: 4. Devotion
Men need to receive: 4. Admiration
Women need to receive: 5. Validation
Men need to receive: 5. Approval
Women need to receive: 6. Reassurance
Men need to receive: 6. Encouragement

Understanding Your Primary Needs

Certainly every man and woman ultimately needs all twelve kinds of love. To acknowledge the six kinds of love primarily needed by women does not imply that men do not need these kinds of love. Men also need caring, understanding, respect, devotion, validation, and reassurance. What is meant by "primary need" is that fulfilling a primary need is required before one is able fully to receive and appreciate the other kinds of love.

Fulfilling a primary need is required before one is able fully to receive and appreciate the other kinds of love.

A man becomes fully receptive to and appreciative of the six kinds of love primarily needed by women (caring, understanding, respect, devotion, validation, and reassurance) when his own primary needs are first fulfilled. Likewise a woman needs trust, acceptance, appreciation, admiration, approval, and encouragement. But before she can truly value and appreciate these kinds of love, her primary needs first must be fulfilled.

Understanding the primary kinds of love that your partner needs is a powerful secret for improving relationships on Earth. Remembering that men are from Mars will help you remember and accept that men have different primary love needs.

It's easy for a woman to give what she needs and forget that her favorite Martian may need something else. Likewise men tend to focus on their needs, losing track of the fact that the kind of love they need is not always appropriate for or supportive of their favorite Venusian.

The most powerful and practical aspect of this new understanding of love is that these different

kinds of love are reciprocal. For example, when a Martian expresses his caring and understanding, a Venusian automatically begins to reciprocate and return to him the trust and acceptance that he primarily needs. The same thing happens when a Venusian expresses her trust—a Martian automatically will begin to reciprocate with the caring she needs.

In the following six sections we will define the twelve kinds of love in practical terms and reveal their reciprocal nature.

1. She Needs Caring and He Needs Trust

When a man shows interest in a woman's feelings and heartfelt concern for her well-being, she feels loved and cared for. When he makes her feel special in this caring way, he succeeds in fulfilling her first primary need. Naturally she begins to trust him more. When she trusts, she becomes more open and receptive.

When a woman's attitude is open and receptive toward a man he feels trusted. To trust a man is to believe that he is doing his best and that he wants the best for his partner. When a woman's reactions reveal a positive belief in her man's abilities and intentions, his first primary love need is fulfilled. Automatically he is more caring and attentive to her feelings and needs.

2. She Needs Understanding and He Needs Acceptance

When a man listens without judgment but with empathy and relatedness to a woman express her feelings, she feels heard and understood. An understanding attitude doesn't presume to already know a person's thoughts or feelings; instead, it gathers meaning from what is heard, and moves toward validating what is being communicated. The more a woman's need to be heard and understood is fulfilled, the easier it is for her to give her man the acceptance he needs.

When a woman lovingly receives a man without trying to change him, he feels accepted. An accepting attitude does not reject but affirms that he is being favorably received. It does not mean the woman believes he is perfect but indicates that she is not trying to improve him, that she trusts him to make his own improvements. When a man feels accepted it is much easier for him to listen and give her the understanding she needs and deserves.

3. She Needs Respect and He Needs Appreciation

When a man responds to a woman in a way that acknowledges and prioritizes her rights, wishes, and needs, she feels respected. When his behavior takes into consideration her thoughts and feelings, she is sure to feel respected. Concrete and physical expressions of respect, like flowers and remembering anniversaries, are essential to fulfill a woman's third primary love need. When she feels respected it is much easier for her to give her man the appreciation that he deserves.

When a woman acknowledges having received personal benefit and value from a man's efforts and behavior, he feels appreciated. Appreciation is the natural reaction to being supported. When a man is appreciated he knows his effort is not wasted and is thus encouraged to give more. When a man is appreciated he is automatically empowered and motivated to respect his partner more.

4. She Needs Devotion and He Needs Admiration

When a man gives priority to a woman's needs and proudly commits himself to supporting and fulfilling her, her fourth primary love need is fulfilled. A woman thrives when she feels adored and special. A man fulfills her need to be loved in this way when he makes her feelings and needs more important than his other interests—like work, study, and recreation. When a woman feels that she is number one in his life then, quite easily, she admires him.

Just as a woman needs to feel a man's devotion, a man has a primary need to feel a woman's admiration. To admire a man is to regard him with wonder, delight, and pleased approval. A man feels admired when she is happily amazed by his unique characteristics or talents, which may include humor, strength, persistence, integrity, honesty, romance, kindness, love, understanding, and other so-called old-fashioned virtues. When a man feels admired, he feels secure enough to devote himself to his woman and adore her.

5. She Needs Validation and He Needs Approval

When a man does not object to or argue with a woman's feelings and wants but instead accepts and confirms their validity, a woman truly feels loved because her fifth primary need is fulfilled. A man's validating attitude confirms a woman's right to feel the way she does. (It is important to remember one can validate her point of view while having a different point of view.) When a man learns how to let a woman know that he has this validating attitude, he is assured of getting the approval that he primarily needs.

Deep inside, every man wants to be his woman's hero or knight in shining armor. The signal that he has passed her tests is her approval. A woman's approving attitude acknowledges the goodness in a man and expresses overall satisfaction with him. (Remember, giving approval to a man doesn't always mean agreeing with him.) An approving attitude recognizes or looks for the good reasons behind what he does. When he receives the approval he needs, it becomes easier for him to validate her feelings.

6. She Needs Reassurance and He Needs Encouragement

When a man repeatedly shows that he cares, understands, respects, validates, and is devoted to his partner, her primary need to be reassured is fulfilled. A reassuring attitude tells a woman that she is continually loved.

A man commonly makes the mistake of thinking that once he has met all of a woman's primary love needs, and she feels happy and secure, that she should know from then on that she is loved. This is not the case. To fulfill her sixth primary love need he must remember to reassure her again and again.

A man commonly makes the mistake of thinking that once he has met all of a woman's primary love needs, and she feels happy and

secure, that she should know from then on that she is loved.

Similarly, a man primarily needs to be encouraged by a woman. A woman's encouraging attitude gives hope and courage to a man by expressing confidence in his abilities and character. When a woman's attitude expresses trust, acceptance, appreciation, admiration, and approval it encourages a man to be all that he can be. Feeling encouraged motivates him to give her the loving reassurance that she needs.

The best comes out in a man when his six primary love needs are fulfilled. But when a woman doesn't know what he primarily needs and gives a caring love rather than a trusting love, she may unknowingly sabotage their relationship. This next story exemplifies this point.

THE KNIGHT IN SHINING ARMOR

Deep inside every man there is a hero or a knight in shining armor. More than anything, he wants to succeed in serving and protecting the woman he loves. When he feels trusted, he is able to tap into this noble part of himself. He becomes more caring. When he doesn't feel trusted he loses some of his aliveness and energy, and after a while he can stop caring.

Imagine a knight in shining armor traveling through the countryside. Suddenly he hears a woman crying out in distress. In an instant he comes alive. Urging his horse to a gallop, he races to her castle, where she is trapped by a dragon. The noble knight pulls out his sword and slays the dragon. As a result, he is lovingly received by the princess.

As the gates open he is welcomed and celebrated by the family of the princess and the townspeople. He is invited to live in the town and is acknowledged as a hero. He and the princess fall in love.

A month later the noble knight goes off on another trip. On his way back, he hears his beloved princess crying out for help. Another dragon has attacked the castle. When the knight arrives he pulls out his sword to slay the dragon.

Before he swings, the princess cries out from the tower, "Don't use your sword, use this noose. It will work better."

She throws him the noose and motions to him instructions about how to use it. He hesitantly follows her instructions. He wraps it around the dragon's neck and then pulls hard. The dragon dies and everyone rejoices.

At the celebration dinner the knight feels he didn't really do anything. Somehow, because he used her noose and didn't use his sword, he doesn't quite feel worthy of the town's trust and admiration. After the event he is slightly depressed and forgets to shine his armor.

A month later he goes on yet another trip. As he leaves with his sword, the princess reminds him to be careful and tells him to take the noose. On his way home, he sees yet another dragon attacking the castle. This time he rushes forward with his sword but hesitates, thinking maybe he should use the noose. In that moment of hesitation, the dragon breathes fire and burns his right arm. In confusion he looks up and sees his princess waving from the castle window.

"Use the poison," she yells. "The noose doesn't work."

She throws him the poison, which he pours into the dragon's mouth, and the dragon dies. Everyone rejoices and celebrates, but the knight feels ashamed.

A month later, he goes on another trip. As he leaves with his sword, the princess reminds him to be careful, and to bring the noose and the poison. He is annoyed by her suggestions but brings them just in case.

This time on his journey he hears another woman in distress. As he rushes to her call, his depression is lifted and he feels confident and alive. But as he draws his sword to slay the dragon, he again hesitates. He wonders, Should I use my sword, the noose, or the poison? What would the princess say?

For a moment he is confused. But then he remembers how he had felt before he knew the princess, back in the days when he only carried a sword. With a burst of renewed confidence he throws off the noose and poison and charges the dragon with his trusted sword. He slays the dragon and the townspeople rejoice.

The knight in shining armor never returned to his princess. He stayed in this new village and lived happily ever after. He eventually married, but only after making sure his new partner knew nothing about nooses and poisons.

Remembering that within every man is a knight in shining armor is a powerful metaphor to help you remember a man's primary needs. Although a man may appreciate caring and assistance sometimes, too much of it will lessen his confidence or turn him off.

HOW YOU MAY BE UNKNOWINGLY TURNING OFF YOUR PARTNER

Without an awareness of what is important for the opposite sex, men and women don't realize how much they may be hurting their partners. We can see that both men and women unknowingly communicate in ways that are not only counterproductive but may even be a turnoff.

Men and women get their feelings hurt most easily when they do not get the kind of primary love they need. Women generally don't realize the ways they communicate that are unsupportive and hurtful to the male ego. A woman may try to be sensitive to a man's feelings, but because his primary love needs are different from hers, she doesn't instinctively anticipate his needs.

Through understanding a man's primary love needs, a woman can be more aware and sensitive to the sources of his discontent. The following is a list of common communication mistakes women make in relation to a man's primary love needs.

Mistakes women commonly make: 1. She tries to improve his behavior or help him by offering unsolicited advice.

Why he doesn't feel loved: 1. He feels unloved because she doesn't *trust* him anymore.

Mistakes women commonly make: 2. She tries to change or control his behavior by sharing her upset or negative feelings. (It is OK to share feelings but not when they attempt to manipulate or punish.)

Why he doesn't feel loved: 2. He feels unloved because she doesn't *accept* him as he is.

Mistakes women commonly make: 3. She doesn't acknowledge what he does for her but complains about what he has not done.

Why he doesn't feel loved: 3. He feels taken for granted and unloved because she doesn't *appreciate* what he does.

Mistakes women commonly make: 4. She corrects his behavior and tells him what to do, as if he were a child.

Why he doesn't feel loved: 4. He feels unloved because he does not feel *admired.*

Mistakes women commonly make: 5. She expresses her upset feelings indirectly with rhetorical questions like "How could you do that?"

Why he doesn't feel loved: 5. He feels unloved because he feels she has taken away her *approval* of him. He no longer feels like the good guy.

Mistakes women commonly make: 6. When he makes decisions or takes initiatives she corrects or criticizes him.

Why he doesn't feel loved: 6. He feels unloved because she does not *encourage* him to do things on his own.

Just as women easily make mistakes when they don't understand what men primarily need, men also make mistakes. Men generally don't recognize the ways they communicate that are disrespectful and unsupportive to women. A man may even know that she is unhappy with him, but unless he understands *why* she feels unloved and *what* she needs he cannot change his approach.

Through understanding a woman's primary needs, a man can be more sensitive to and respectful of her needs. The following is a list of communication mistakes men make in relation to a woman's primary emotional needs.

Mistakes men make: 1. He doesn't listen, gets easily distracted, doesn't ask interested or concerned questions.

Why she doesn't feel loved: 1. She feels unloved because he is not attentive or showing that he *cares.*

Mistakes men make: 2. He takes her feelings literally and corrects her. He thinks she is asking for solutions so he gives advice.

Why she doesn't feel loved: 2. She feels unloved because he doesn't *understand* her.

Mistakes men make: 3. He listens but then gets angry and blames her for upsetting him or for bringing him down.

Why she doesn't feel loved: 3. She feels unloved because he doesn't

respect her feelings.

Mistakes men make: 4. He minimizes the importance of her feelings and needs. He makes children or work more important.

Why she doesn't feel loved: 4. She feels unloved because he is not *devoted* to her and doesn't honor her as special.

Mistakes men make: 5. When she is upset, he explains why he is right and why she should not be upset.

Why she doesn't feel loved: 5. She feels unloved because he doesn't *validate* her feelings but instead makes her feel wrong and unsupported.

Mistakes men make: 6. After listening he says nothing or just walks away.

Why she doesn't feel loved: 6. She feels insecure because she doesn't get the *reassurance* she needs.

WHEN LOVE FAILS

Love often fails because people instinctively give what they want. Because a woman's primary love needs are to be cared for, understood, and so forth, she automatically gives her man a lot of caring and understanding. To a man this caring support often feels as though she doesn't trust him. Being trusted is his primary need, not being cared for.

Then, when he doesn't respond positively to her caring she can't understand why he doesn't appreciate her brand of support. He, of course, is giving his own brand of love, which isn't what she needs. So they are caught in a loop of failing to fulfill each other's needs.

> Beth complained, saying, "I just can't keep giving and not getting back. Arthur doesn't appreciate what I give. I love him, but he doesn't love me."
>
> Arthur complained, saying, "Nothing I do is ever good enough. I don't know what to do. I've tried everything and she still doesn't love me. I love her, but it's just not working."

Beth and Arthur have been married for eight years. They both felt like giving up because they didn't feel loved. Ironically, they *both* claimed to be giving more love than they were getting back. Beth believed she was giving more, while Arthur thought he was giving the most. In truth they were both giving, but neither was getting what they wanted or needed.

They did love each other, but because they didn't understand their partner's primary needs their love wasn't getting through. Beth was giving what she needed to receive while Arthur was giving what he wanted. Gradually they burned out.

Many people give up when relationships become too difficult. Relationships become easier when we understand our partner's primary needs. Without giving more but by giving what is required we do not burn out. This understanding of the twelve different kinds of love finally explains why our sincere loving attempts fail. To fulfill your partner, you need to learn how to give the love he or she *primarily* needs.

LEARNING TO LISTEN WITHOUT GETTING ANGRY

The number one way a man can succeed in fulfilling a woman's primary love needs is through communication. As we have discussed before, communication is particularly important on Venus. By learning to listen to a woman's feelings, a man can effectively shower a woman with caring, understanding, respect, devotion, validation, and reassurance.

One of the biggest problems men have with listening to women is that they become frustrated or angry because they forget that women are from Venus and that they are supposed to communicate differently. The chart below outlines some ways to remember these differences and makes some suggestions about what to do.

How to Listen Without Getting Angry

What to remember: 1. Remember anger comes from not understanding her point of view, and this is never her fault.

What to do and what not to do: 1. Take responsibility to understand. Don't blame her for upsetting you. Start again trying to understand.

What to remember: 2. Remember that feelings don't always make sense right away, but they're still valid and need empathy.

What to do and what not to do: 2. Breathe deeply, don't say anything! Relax and let go of trying to control. Try to imagine how you would feel if you saw the world through her eyes.

What to remember: 3. Remember that anger may come from not knowing what to do to make things better. Even if she doesn't immediately feel better, your listening and understanding are helping.

What to do and what not to do: 3. Don't blame her for not feeling better from your solutions. How can she feel better when solutions are not what she needs? Resist the urge to offer solutions.

What to remember: 4. Remember you don't have to agree to understand her point of view or to be appreciated as a good listener.

What to do and what not to do: 4. If you wish to express a differing point of view make sure she is finished and then rephrase her point of view before giving your own. Do not raise your voice.

What to remember: 5. Remember you don't fully have to understand her point of view to succeed in being a good listener.

What to do and what not to do: 5. Let her know you don't understand but want to. Take responsibility for not understanding; don't judge her or imply she can't be understood.

What to remember: 6. Remember you are not responsible for how she feels. She may sound as though she is blaming you, but she is really needing to be understood.

What to do and what not to do: 6. Refrain from defending yourself until she feels that you understand and care. Then it is OK gently to explain yourself or to apologize.

What to remember: 7. Remember that if she makes you really angry she is probably mistrusting you. Deep inside her is a scared little girl who is afraid of opening up and being hurt and who needs your kindness and compassion.

What to do and what not to do: 7. Don't argue with her feelings and opinions. Take time out and discuss things later when there is less emotional charge. Practice the Love Letter technique as described in chapter 11.

When a man can listen to a woman's feelings without getting angry and frustrated, he gives her a wonderful gift. He makes it safe for her to express herself. The more she is able to express herself, the more she feels heard and understood, and the more she is able to give a man the loving trust, acceptance, appreciation, admiration, approval, and encouragement that he needs.

THE ART OF EMPOWERING A MAN

Just as men need to learn the art of listening to fulfill a woman's primary love needs, women need to learn the art of empowerment. When a woman enlists the support of a man, she empowers him to be all that he can be. A man feels empowered when he is trusted, accepted, appreciated, admired, approved of, and encouraged.

Like in our story of the knight in shining armor, many women try to help their man by improving him but unknowingly weaken or hurt him. Any attempt to change him takes away the loving trust, acceptance, appreciation, admiration, approval, and encouragement that are his primary needs.

The secret of empowering a man is never to try to change him or improve him. Certainly you may want him to change—just don't act on that desire. Only if he directly and specifically asks for advice is he open to assistance in changing.

The secret of empowering a man is never to try to change him or improve him.

Give Trust and Not Advice

On Venus, it is considered a loving gesture to offer advice. But on Mars it is not. Women need to remember that Martians do not offer advice unless it is directly requested. A way of showing love is to trust another Martian to solve his problems on his own.

This doesn't mean a woman has to squash her feelings. It's OK for her to feel frustrated or even angry, as long as she doesn't try to change him. Any attempt to change him is unsupportive and counterproductive.

When a woman loves a man, she often begins trying to improve their relationship. In her exuberance she makes him a target for her improvements. She begins a gradual process of slowly rehabilitating him.

Why Men Resist Change

In myriad ways she tries to change him or improve him. She thinks her attempts to change him are loving, but he feels controlled, manipulated, rejected, and unloved. He will stubbornly reject her because he feels she is rejecting him. When a woman tries to change a man, he is not getting the loving trust and acceptance he actually needs to change and grow.

When I ask a room filled with hundreds of women and men they all have had the same experience: the more a woman tries to change a man, the more he resists.

The problem is that when a man resists her attempts to improve him, she misinterprets his response. She mistakenly thinks he is not willing to change, probably because he does not love her enough. The truth is, however, that he is resistant to changing because he believes he is not being loved enough. When a man feels loved, trusted, accepted, appreciated, and so forth, automatically he begins to change, grow, and improve.

Two Kinds of Men/One Kind of Behavior

There are two kinds of men. One will become incredibly defensive and stubborn when a woman tries to change him, while the other will agree to change but later will forget and revert back to the old behavior. A man either actively resists or passively resists.

When a man does not feel loved just the way he is, he will either consciously or unconsciously repeat the behavior that is not being accepted. He feels an inner compulsion to repeat the behavior until he feels loved and accepted.

For a man to improve himself he needs to feel loved in an accepting way. Otherwise he defends himself and stays the same. He needs to feel accepted just the way he is, and then he, on his own, will look for ways to improve.

Men Don't Want to Be Improved

Just as men want to explain why women shouldn't be upset, women want to explain why men shouldn't behave the way they do. Just as men mistakenly want to "fix" women, women mistakenly try to "improve" men.

Men see the world through Martian eyes. Their motto is "don't fix it, if it isn't broken." When a woman attempts to change a man, he receives the message that she thinks he is broken. This hurts a man and makes him very defensive. He doesn't feel loved and accepted.

The best way to help a man grow is to let go of *trying* to change him in any way.

A man needs to be accepted regardless of his imperfections. To accept a person's imperfections is not easy, especially when we see how he could become better. It does, however, become easier when we understand that the best way to help him grow is to let go of *trying* to change him in any way.

The following chart lists ways a woman can support a man in growing and changing by giving up trying to change him in any way.

How to Give Up Trying to Change a Man

What she needs to remember: 1. Remember: don't ask him too many questions when he is upset or he will feel you are trying to change him.

What she can do: 1. Ignore that he is upset unless he wants to talk to you about it. Show some initial concern, but not too much, as an invitation to talk.

What she needs to remember: 2. Remember: trying to improve him in give up any way. He needs your love, not rejection, to grow.

What she can do: 2. Trust him to grow on his own. Honestly share feelings but without the demand that he change.

What she needs to remember: 3. Remember: when you offer unsolicited advice he may feel mistrusted, controlled, or rejected.

What she can do: 3. Practice patience and trust that he will learn on his own what he needs to learn. Wait until he asks for your advice.

What she needs to remember: 4. Remember: when a man becomes stubborn and resists change he is not feeling loved; he is afraid to admit his mistakes for fear of not being loved.

What she can do: 4. Practice showing him that he doesn't have to be perfect to deserve your love Practice forgiveness. (See chapter 11.)

What she needs to remember: 5. Remember: if you make sacrifices hoping he will do the same for you then he will feel pressured to change.

What she can do: 5. Practice doing things for yourself and not depending on him to make you happy.

What she needs to remember: 6. Remember: you can share negative feelings without trying to change him. When he feels accepted it is

easier for him to listen.

What she can do: 6. When sharing feelings, let him know that you are not trying to tell him what to do but that you want him to take your feelings into consideration.

What she needs to remember: 7. Remember: if you give him directions and make decisions for him he will feel corrected and controlled.

What she can do: 7. Relax and surrender. Practice accepting imperfection. Make his feelings more important than perfection and don't lecture or correct him.

As men and women learn to support each other in the ways that are most important for their own unique needs, change and growth will become automatic. With a greater awareness of your partner's six primary needs you can redirect your loving support according to their needs and make your relationships dramatically easier and more fulfilling.

9

How to Avoid Arguments

One of the most difficult challenges in our loving relationships is handling differences and disagreements. Often when couples disagree their discussions can turn into arguments and then without much warning into battles. Suddenly they stop talking in a loving manner and automatically begin hurting each other: blaming, complaining, accusing, demanding, resenting, and doubting.

Men and women arguing in this way hurt not only their feelings but also their relationship. Just as communication is the most important element in a relationship, arguments can be the most destructive element, because the closer we are to someone, the easier it is to bruise or be bruised.

Just as communication is the most important element in a relationship, arguments can be the most destructive element.

For all practical purposes I strongly recommend that couples not argue. When two people are not sexually involved it is a lot easier to remain detached and objective while arguing or debating. But when couples argue who are emotionally involved and especially sexually involved, they easily take things too personally.

As a basic guideline: never argue. Instead discuss the pros and cons of something. Negotiate for what you want but don't argue. It is possible to be honest, open, and even express negative feelings without arguing or fighting.

Some couples fight all the time, and gradually their love dies. On the other extreme, some couples suppress their honest feelings in order to avoid conflict and not argue. As a result of suppressing their true feelings they lose touch with their loving feelings as well. One couple is having a war while the other is having a cold war.

It is best for a couple to find a balance between these two extremes. By remembering we are from different planets and thus developing good communication skills, it is possible to avoid arguments without suppressing negative feelings and conflicting ideas and desires.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE ARGUE

Without understanding how men and women are different it is very easy to get into arguments that hurt not only our partner but also ourselves. The secret to avoiding arguments is loving and respectful communication.

The differences and disagreements don't hurt as much as the ways in which we communicate them. Ideally an argument does not have to be hurtful; instead it can simply be an engaging conversation that expresses our differences and disagreements. (Inevitably all couples will have differences and disagree at times.) But practically speaking most couples start out arguing about one thing and, within five minutes, are arguing about the way they are arguing.

Unknowingly they begin hurting each other; what could have been an innocent argument, easily resolved with mutual understanding and an acceptance of differences, escalates into a battle. They refuse to accept or understand the content of their partner's point of view because of the way they are being approached.

Resolving an argument requires extending or stretching our point of view to include and integrate another point of view. To make this stretch we need to feel appreciated and respected. If our partner's attitude is unloving, our self-esteem can actually be wounded by taking on their point of view.

Most couples start out arguing about one thing and, within five minutes, are arguing about the way they are arguing.

The more intimate we are with someone, the more difficult it is objectively to hear their point of view without reacting to their negative feelings. To protect ourselves from feeling worthy of their disrespect or disapproval automatic defenses come up to resist their point of view. Even if we agree with their point of view, we may stubbornly persist in arguing with them.

WHY ARGUMENTS HURT

It is not *what* we say that hurts but *how* we say it. Quite commonly when a man feels challenged, his attention becomes focused on being right and he forgets to be loving as well. Automatically his ability to communicate in a caring, respectful, and reassuring tone decreases. He is aware neither of how uncaring he sounds nor of how hurtful this is to his partner. At such times, a simple disagreement may sound like an attack to a woman; a request turns into an order. Naturally a woman feels resistant to this unloving approach, even when she would be otherwise receptive to the content of what he was saying.

A man unknowingly hurts his partner by speaking in an uncaring manner and then goes on to explain why she should not be upset. He mistakenly assumes she is resisting the content of his point of view, when really his unloving delivery is what upsets her. Because he does not understand her reaction, he focuses more on explaining the merit of what he is saying instead of correcting the way he is saying it.

He has no idea that *he* is starting an argument; he thinks *she* is arguing with him. He defends his point of view while she defends *herself* from his sharpened expressions, which are hurtful to her.

When a man neglects to honor a woman's hurt feelings he invalidates them and increases her hurt. It is hard for him to understand her hurt because he is not as vulnerable to uncaring comments and tones.

Consequently, a man may not even realize how much he is hurting his partner and thus provoking her resistance.

Similarly, women don't realize how they are hurtful to men. Unlike a man, when a woman feels challenged the tone of her speech automatically becomes increasingly mistrusting and rejecting. This kind of rejection is more hurtful to a man, especially when he is emotionally involved.

Women start and escalate arguments by first sharing negative feelings about their partner's behavior and then by giving unsolicited advice. When a woman neglects to buffer her negative feelings with messages of trust and acceptance, a man responds negatively, leaving the woman confused. Again she is unaware of how hurtful her mistrust is to him.

To avoid arguing we need to remember that our partner objects not to what we are saying but to how we are saying it. It takes two to argue, but it only takes one to stop an argument. The best way to stop an argument is to nip it in the bud. Take responsibility for recognizing when a disagreement is turning into an argument. Stop talking and take a time-out. Reflect on how you are approaching your partner. Try to understand how you are not giving them what they need. Then, after some time has passed, come back and talk again but in a loving and respectful way. Time-outs allow us to cool off, heal our wounds, and center ourselves before trying to communicate again.

THE FOUR F'S FOR AVOIDING HURT

There are basically four stances that individuals take to avoid getting hurt in arguments. They are the four f's: fight, flight, fake, and fold. Each of these stances offers a short-term gain, but in the long run they are all counterproductive. Let's explore each of these positions.

1. *Fight.* This stance definitely comes from Mars. When a conversation becomes unloving and unsupportive some individuals instinctively begin to fight. They immediately move into an offensive stance. Their motto is "the best defense is a strong offense." They strike out by blaming, judging, criticizing, and making their partner look wrong. They tend to start yelling and express lots of anger. Their inner motive is to intimidate their partner into loving and supporting them. When their partner backs down, they assume they have won, but in truth they have lost.

Intimidation always weakens trust in a relationship.

Intimidation always weakens trust in a relationship. To muscle your way into getting what you want by making others look wrong is a sure way to fail in a relationship. When couples fight they gradually lose their ability to be open and vulnerable. Women close up to protect themselves and men shut down and stop caring as much. Gradually they lose whatever intimacy they had in the beginning.

2. *Flight.* This stance also comes from Mars. To avoid confrontation Martians may retire into their caves and never come out. This is like a cold war. They refuse to talk and nothing gets resolved. This passive-aggressive behavior is not the same as taking a time-out and then coming back to talk and

resolve things in a more loving fashion.

These Martians are afraid of confrontation and would rather lie low and avoid talking about any topics that may cause an argument. They walk on eggshells in a relationship. Women commonly complain they have to walk on eggshells, but men do also. It is so ingrained in men that they don't even realize how much they do it.

Rather than arguing, some couples will simply stop talking about their disagreements. Their way of trying to get what they want is to punish their partner by withholding love. They do not come out and directly hurt their partners, like the fighters. Instead they indirectly hurt them by slowly depriving them of the love they deserve. By withholding love our partners are sure to have less to give us.

The short-term gain is peace and harmony, but if issues are not being talked about and feelings are not being heard then resentments will build. In the long run, they lose touch with the passionate and loving feelings that drew them together. They generally use overworking, overeating, or other addictions as a way to numb their unresolved painful feelings.

3. ***Fake.*** This stance comes from Venus. To avoid being hurt in a confrontation this person pretends that there is no problem. She puts a smile on her face and appears to be very agreeable and happy with everything. Over time, however, these women become increasingly resentful; they are always giving to their partner but they do not get what they need in return. This resentment blocks the natural expression of love.

They are afraid to be honest about their feelings, so they try to make everything "all right, OK, and fine." Men commonly use these phrases, but for them they mean something completely different. He means "It is OK because I am dealing with it alone" or "It's all right because I know what to do" or "It's fine because I am handling it, and I don't need any help." Unlike a man, when a woman uses these phrases it may be a sign that she is trying to avoid a conflict or argument.

To avoid making waves, a woman may even fool herself and believe that everything is OK, fine, and all right when it really isn't. She sacrifices or denies her wants, feelings, and needs to avoid the possibility of conflict.

4. ***Fold.*** This stance also comes from Venus. Rather than argue this person gives in. They will take the blame and assume responsibility for whatever is upsetting their partner. In the short run they create what looks like a very loving and supportive relationship, but they end up losing themselves.

A man once complained to me about his wife. He said "I love her so much. She gives me everything I want. My only complaint is she is not happy." His wife had spent twenty years denying herself for her husband. They never fought, and if you asked her about her relationship she would say "We have a great relationship. My husband is so loving. Our only problem is me. I am depressed and I don't know why." She is depressed because she has denied herself by being agreeable for twenty years.

To please their partners these people intuitively sense their partners' desires and then mold themselves in order to please. Eventually they resent having to give up themselves for love.

Any form of rejection is very painful because they are already rejecting themselves so much. They seek to avoid rejection at all costs and want to be loved by all. In this process they literally give up who they are.

You may have found yourself in one of these four F's or in many of them. People commonly move

from one to the other. In each of the above four strategies our intention is to protect ourselves from being hurt. Unfortunately, it does not work. What works is to identify arguments and stop. Take a time-out to cool off and then come back and talk again. Practice communicating with increased understanding and respect for the opposite sex and you will gradually learn to avoid arguments and fights.

WHY WE ARGUE

Men and women commonly argue about money, sex, decisions, scheduling, values, child rearing, and household responsibilities. These discussions and negotiations, however, turn into painful arguments for only one reason—we are not feeling loved. Emotional pain comes from not feeling loved, and when a person is feeling emotional pain it is hard to be loving.

Because women are not from Mars, they do not instinctively realize what a man needs in order to deal successfully with disagreements. Conflicting ideas, feelings, and desires are a difficult challenge for a man. The closer he is to a woman, the harder it is to deal with differences and disagreements. When she doesn't like something he has done, he tends to take it very personally and feels she doesn't like him.

A man can handle differences and disagreements best when his emotional needs are being fulfilled. When he is deprived of the love he needs, however, he becomes defensive and his dark side begins to emerge; instinctively he draws his sword.

On the surface he may seem to be arguing about the issue (money, responsibilities, and so forth), but the real reason he has drawn his sword is he doesn't feel loved. When a man argues about money, scheduling, children, or any other issue, secretly he may be arguing for some of the following reasons.

The Secret Reasons Men Argue

The hidden reason he is arguing: 1."I don't like it when she gets upset over the smallest things I do or don't do. I feel criticized, rejected, and unaccepted."

What he needs not to argue: 1. He needs to feel accepted just the way he is. Instead he feels she is trying to improve him.

The hidden reason he is arguing: 2. "I don't like it when she starts telling me how I should do things. I don't feel admired. Instead I feel like I am being treated like a child."

What he needs not to argue: 2. He needs to feel admired. Instead he feels put down.

The hidden reason he is arguing: 3. "I don't like it when she blames me for her unhappiness. I don't feel encouraged to be her knight in shining armor."

What he needs not to argue: 3. He needs to feel encouraged. Instead he feels like giving up.

The hidden reason he is arguing: 4. "I don't like it when she complains about how much she does or how unappreciated she feels. It makes me feel unappreciated for the things I do for her."

What he needs not to argue: 4. He needs to feel appreciated. Instead he feels blamed, unacknowledged, and powerless.

The hidden reason he is arguing: 5. "I don't like it when she worries about everything that could go wrong. I don't feel trusted."

What he needs not to argue: 5. He needs to feel trusted and appreciated for his contribution to her security. Instead he feels responsible for her anxiety.

The hidden reason he is arguing: 6. "I don't like it when she expects me to do things or talk when she wants me to. I don't feel accepted or respected."

What he needs not to argue: 6. He needs to feel accepted just the way he is. Instead he feels controlled or pressured to talk and thus has nothing to say. It makes him feel that he can never satisfy her.

The hidden reason he is arguing: 7. "I don't like it when she feels hurt by what I say. I feel mistrusted, misunderstood, and pushed away."

What he needs not to argue: 7. He needs to feel accepted and trusted. Instead he feels rejected and unforgiven.

The hidden reason he is arguing: 8. "I don't like it when she expects me to read her mind. I can't. It makes me feel bad or inadequate."

What he needs not to argue: 8. He needs to feel approved of and accepted. Instead he feels like a failure.

Fulfilling a man's primary emotional needs will diminish his tendency to engage in hurtful arguments. Automatically he will be able to listen and speak with much greater respect, understanding, and caring. In this way arguments, differences of opinion, and negative feelings can be resolved through conversation, negotiation, and compromise without escalating into hurtful arguments.

Women also contribute to hurtful arguments but for different reasons. On the surface she may be arguing about finances, responsibilities, or another issue, but secretly inside she is resisting her partner for some of these following reasons.

The Secret Reasons Women Argue

The hidden reason she is arguing: 1."I don't like it when he minimizes the importance of my feelings or requests. I feel dismissed and unimportant."

What she needs not to argue: 1. She needs to feel validated and cherished. Instead she feels judged and ignored.

The hidden reason she is arguing: 2. "I don't like it when he forgets to do the things I ask, and then I sound like a nag. I feel like I am begging for his support."

What she needs not to argue: 2. She needs to feel respected and remembered. Instead she feels neglected and at the bottom of his list of priorities.

The hidden reason she is arguing: 3. "I don't like it when he blames me for being upset. I feel like I have to be perfect to be loved. I am not perfect."

What she needs not to argue: 3. She needs him to understand why she is upset and reassure her that she is still loved and that she doesn't have to be perfect. Instead she feels unsafe to be herself.

The hidden reason she is arguing: 4. "I don't like it when he raises his voice or starts making lists of why he is right. It makes me feel like I am wrong and he doesn't care about my point of view."

What she needs not to argue: 4. She needs to feel understood and respected. Instead she feels unheard, bullied, and pushed down.

The hidden reason she is arguing: 5. "I don't like his condescending attitude when I ask questions about decisions we need to make. It makes me feel like I am a burden or that I am wasting his time."

What she needs not to argue: 5. She needs to feel that he cares about her feelings, and respects her need to gather information. Instead she feels disrespected and unappreciated.

The hidden reason she is arguing: 6. "I don't like it when he doesn't respond to my questions or comments. It makes me feel like I don't exist."

What she needs not to argue: 6. She needs to feel reassured that he is listening and that he cares. Instead she feels ignored or judged.

The hidden reason she is arguing: 7. "I don't like it when he explains why I should not be hurt, worried, angry, or anything else. I feel invalidated and unsupported."

What she needs not to argue: 7. She needs to feel validated and understood. Instead she feels unsupported, unloved, and resentful.

The hidden reason she is arguing: 8. "I don't like it when he expects me to be more detached. It makes me feel like it is wrong or weak to have feelings."

What she needs not to argue: 8. She needs to feel respected and cherished, especially when she is sharing her feelings. Instead she feels unsafe and unprotected.

Though all these painful feelings and needs are valid, they are generally not dealt with and

communicated directly. Instead they build up inside and come bursting up during an argument. Sometimes they are directly addressed, but usually they come up and are expressed through facial expression, body posture, and tone of voice.

Men and women need to understand and cooperate with their particular sensitivities and not resent them. You will be addressing the true problem by trying to communicate in a way that fulfills your partner's emotional needs. Arguments can then truly become mutually supportive conversations necessary to resolve and negotiate differences and disagreements.

THE ANATOMY OF AN ARGUMENT

A hurtful argument usually has a basic anatomy. Maybe you can relate to the following example.

My wife and I went on a beautiful walk and picnic. After eating, everything seemed fine until I started talking about possible investments. Suddenly she became upset that I would consider investing a certain portion of our savings in aggressive stocks. From my point of view I was only considering it, but what she heard was that I was planning it (without even considering her point of view). She became upset that I would do such a thing. I became upset with her for being upset with me, and we had an argument.

I thought she disapproved of my investment choices and argued for their validity. My argument however was fueled by my anger that she was upset with me. She argued that aggressive stocks were too risky. But really she was upset that I would consider this investment without exploring her ideas on the subject. In addition she was upset that I was not respecting her right to be upset. Eventually I became so upset that she apologized to me for misunderstanding and mistrusting me and we cooled down.

Later on, after we had made up, she posed this question. She said, "Many times when we argue, it seems that I get upset about something, and then you get upset that I am upset, and then I have to apologize for upsetting you. Somehow I think something is missing. Sometimes I would like you to tell me you are sorry for upsetting me."

Immediately I saw the logic of her point of view. Expecting an apology from her did seem rather unfair, especially when I upset her first. This new insight transformed our relationship. As I shared this experience in my seminars I discovered that thousands of women could immediately identify with my wife's experience. It was another common male/female pattern. Let's review the basic pattern.

1. A woman expresses her upset feelings about "XYZ."
2. A man explains why she shouldn't be upset about "XYZ."
3. She feels invalidated and becomes more upset. (She is now more upset about being invalidated than about "XYZ.")
4. He feels her disapproval and becomes upset. He blames her for upsetting him and expects an apology before making up.
5. She apologizes and wonders what happened, or she becomes more upset and the argument escalates into a battle.

With a clearer awareness of the anatomy of an argument, I was able to solve this problem in a fairer way. Remembering that women are from Venus, I practiced not blaming her for being upset. Instead I would seek to understand how I had upset her and show her that I cared. Even if she was misunderstanding me, if she felt hurt by me I needed to let her know that I cared and was sorry.

When she would become upset I learned first to listen, then genuinely to try to understand what she was upset about, and then to say, "I'm sorry that I upset you when I said …" The result was immediate. We argued much less.

Sometimes, however, apologizing is very difficult. At those times I take a deep breath and say nothing. Inside I try to imagine how she feels and discover the reasons from her point of view. Then I say, "I'm sorry you feel so upset." Although this is not an apology it does say "I care," and that seems to help a lot.

Men rarely say "I'm sorry" because on Mars it means you have done something wrong and you are apologizing.

Men rarely say "I'm sorry" because on Mars it means you have done something wrong and you are apologizing. Women, however, say "I'm sorry" as a way to say "I care about what you are feeling." It doesn't mean they are apologizing for doing something wrong. The men reading this who rarely say "I am sorry" can create wonders by learning to use this aspect of the Venusian language. The easiest way to derail an argument is to say "I'm sorry."

Most arguments escalate when a man begins to invalidate a woman's feelings and she responds to him disapprovingly. Being a man, I've had to learn to practice validating. My wife practiced expressing her feelings more directly without disapproving of me. The result was fewer fights and more love and trust. Without having this new awareness we probably would still be having the same arguments.

Most arguments escalate when a man begins to invalidate a woman's feelings and she responds to him disapprovingly.

To avoid painful arguments it is important to recognize how men unknowingly invalidate and how women unknowingly send messages of disapproval.

How Men Unknowingly Start Arguments

The most common way men start arguments is by invalidating a woman's feelings or point of view.

Men don't realize how much they invalidate.

For example, a man may make light of a woman's negative feelings. He might say "Ah, don't worry about it." To another man this phrase would seem friendly. But to a female intimate partner it is insensitive and hurts.

In another example, a man might try to resolve a woman's upset by saying "It's not such a big deal." Then he offers some practical solution to the problem, expecting her to be relieved and happy. He doesn't understand that she feels invalidated and unsupported. She cannot appreciate his solution until he validates her need to be upset.

A very common example is when a man has done something to upset a woman. His instinct is to make her feel better by explaining why she shouldn't be upset. He confidently explains that he has a perfectly good, logical, and rational reason for what he did. He has no idea that this attitude makes her feel as though she has no right to be upset. When he explains himself, the only message she may hear is that he doesn't care about her feelings.

For her to hear his good reasons, she first needs *him* to hear her good reasons for being upset. He needs to put his explanations on hold and listen with understanding. When he simply starts to care about her feelings she will start to feel supported.

This change in approach takes practice but can be achieved. Generally, when a woman shares feelings of frustration, disappointment, or worry *every* cell in a man's body instinctively reacts with a list of explanations and justifications designed to explain away her upset feelings. A man never intends to make matters worse. His tendency to explain away feelings is just Martian instinct.

By understanding that his automatic gut reactions in this instance are counterproductive, a man can, however, make this shift. Through a growing awareness and his experiences of what works with a woman, a man can make this change.

How Women Unknowingly Start Arguments

The most common way women unknowingly start arguments is by not being direct when they share their feelings. Instead of directly expressing her dislike or disappointment, a woman asks rhetorical questions and unknowingly (or knowingly) communicates a message of disapproval. Even though sometimes this is not the message she wants to give it is generally what a man will hear.

The most common way women unknowingly start arguments is by not being direct when they share their feelings.

For example, when a man is late, a woman may feel "I don't like waiting for you when you are late" or "I was worried that something had happened to you." When he arrives, instead of directly sharing her feelings she asks a rhetorical question like "How could you be so late?" or "What am I supposed to think when you're so late?" or "Why didn't you call?"

Certainly asking someone "Why didn't you call?" is OK if you are sincerely looking for a valid reason. But when a woman is upset the tone of her voice often reveals that she is not looking for a valid answer but is making the point that there is no acceptable reason for being late.

When a man hears a question like "How could you be so late?" or "Why didn't you call?" he does not hear her feelings but instead hears her disapproval. He feels her intrusive desire to help him be more responsible. He feels attacked and becomes defensive. She has no idea how painful her disapproval is to him.

Just as women need validation, men need approval. The more a man loves a woman the more he needs her approval. It is always there in the beginning of a relationship. Either she gives him the message that she approves of him or he feels confident that he can win her approval. In either case the approval is present.

Even if a woman has been wounded by other men or her father she will still give approval in the beginning of the relationship. She may feel "He is a special man, not like others I have known."

A woman withdrawing that approval is particularly painful to a man. Women are generally oblivious of how they pull away their approval. And when they do pull it away, they feel very justified in doing so. A reason for this insensitivity is that women really are unaware of how significant approval is for men.

A woman can, however, learn to disagree with a man's behavior and still approve of who he is. For a man to feel loved he needs her to approve of who he is, even if she disagrees with his behavior. Generally when a woman disagrees with a man's behavior and she wants to change him, she will disapprove of him. Certainly there may be times when she is more approving and less approving of him, but to be disapproving is very painful and hurts him.

Most men are too ashamed to admit how much they need approval. They may go to great lengths to prove they don't care. But why do they immediately become cold, distant, and defensive when they lose a woman's approval? Because not getting what they need hurts.

One of the reasons relationships are so successful in the beginning is that a man is still in a woman's good graces. He is still her knight in shining armor. He receives the blessings of her approval and, as a result, rides high. But as soon as he begins to disappoint her, he falls from grace. He loses her approval. All of a sudden he is cast out into the doghouse.

A man can deal with a woman's disappointment, but when it is expressed with disapproval or rejection he feels wounded by her. Women commonly interrogate a man about his behavior with a disapproving tone. They do this because they think it will teach him a lesson. It does not. It only creates fear and resentment. And gradually he becomes less and less motivated.

To approve of a man is to see the good reasons behind what he does. Even when he is irresponsible or lazy or disrespectful, if she loves him, a woman can find and recognize the goodness within him. To approve is to find the loving intention or the goodness behind the outside behavior.

To treat a man as if he *has* no good reason for what he does is to withhold the approval she so freely gave in the beginning of the relationship. A woman needs to remember that she can still give approval even when she disagrees.

One critical pair of problems from which arguments arise

1. The man feels that the woman disapproves of his point of view.
2. Or the woman disapproves of the way the man is talking to her.

When He Needs Her Approval the Most

Most arguments occur not because two people disagree but because either the man feels that the woman disapproves of his point of view or the woman disapproves of the way he is talking to her. She often may disapprove of him because he is not validating her point of view or speaking to her in a caring way. When men and women learn to approve and validate, they don't have to argue. They can discuss and negotiate differences.

When a man makes a mistake or forgets to do an errand or fulfill some responsibility, a woman doesn't realize how sensitive he feels. This is when he needs her love the most. To withdraw her approval at this point causes him extreme pain. She may not even realize she is doing it. She may think she is just feeling disappointed, but *he* feels her disapproval.

One of the ways women unknowingly communicate disapproval is in their eyes and tone of voice. The words she chooses may be loving, but her look or the tone of her voice can wound a man. His defensive reaction is to make her feel wrong. He invalidates her and justifies himself.

Men are most prone to argue when they have made a mistake or upset the woman they love.

Men are most prone to argue when they have made a mistake or upset the woman they love. If he disappoints her, he wants to explain to her why she should not be so upset. He thinks his reasons will help her to feel better. What he doesn't know is that if she is upset, what she needs most is to be heard and validated.

HOW TO EXPRESS YOUR DIFFERENCES WITHOUT ARGUING

Without healthy role models, expressing differences and disagreements can be a very difficult task. Most of our parents either did not argue at all or when they did it quickly escalated into a fight. The following chart reveals how men and women unknowingly create arguments and suggests healthy alternatives.

In each of the types of arguments listed below I first provide a rhetorical question that a woman might ask and then show how a man might interpret that question. Then I show how a man might explain himself and how a woman could feel invalidated by what she hears. Finally I suggest how men and women can express themselves to be more supportive and avoid arguments.

THE ANATOMY OF AN ARGUMENT

1. When He Comes Home Late

Her rhetorical question: When he arrives late she says "How could you be so late?" or "Why didn't you call?" or "What am I supposed to think?"

The message he hears: The message he hears is "There is no good reason for you to be late! You are irresponsible. I would never be late. I am better than you."

What he explains: When he arrives late and she is upset he explains "There was a lot of traffic on the bridge" or "Sometimes life can't be the way you want" or "You can't expect me to always be on time."

The message she hears: What she hears is "You shouldn't be upset because I have these good and logical reasons for being late. Anyway, my work is more important than you, and you are too demanding!"

How she can be less disapproving: She could say "I really don't like it when you are late. It is upsetting to me. I would really appreciate a call next time you are going to be late."

How he can be more validating: He says "I was late, I'm sorry I upset you." Most important is to just listen without explaining much. Try to understand and validate what she needs to feel loved.

2. When He Forgets Something

Her rhetorical question: When he forgets to do something, she says "How could you forget?" or"When will you ever remember?" or "How am I supposed to trust you?"

The message he hears: The message he hears is "There is no good reason for forgetting. You are stupid and can't be trusted. I give so much more to this relationship."

What he explains: When he forgets to do something and she gets upset he explains "I was real busy and just forgot. These things just happen sometimes" or "It's not such a big deal. It doesn't mean I don't care."

The message she hears: What she hears is "You shouldn't get so upset over such trivial matters. You are being too demanding and your response is irrational. Try to be more realistic. You live in a fantasy world."

How she can be less disapproving: If she is upset, she could say "I don't like it when you forget." She could also take another effective approach and simply not mention that he has forgotten something and

just ask again, saying "I would appreciate it if you would…."(He will know he has forgotten.)

How he can be more validating: He says "I did forget Are you angry with me?" Then let her talk without making her wrong for being angry. As she talks she will realize she is being heard and soon she will feel very appreciative of him.

3. When He Returns from His Cave

Her rhetorical question: When he comes back from his cave, she says "How could you be so unfeeling and cold?" or "How do you expect me to react?" or *"How am I supposed to know what's going on inside you?"*

The message he hears: The message he hears is "There is no good reason for pulling away from me. You are cruel and unloving. You are the wrong man for me. You have hurt me so much more than I have ever hurt you."

What he explains: When he comes back from his cave and she is upset he explains "I needed some time alone, it was only for two days. What is the big deal?" or "I didn't do anything to you. Why does it upset you so?"

The message she hears: What she hears is "You shouldn't feel hurt or abandoned, and if you do, I have no empathy for you. You are too needy and controlling. I will do whatever I want, I don't care about your feelings."

How she can be less disapproving: If it upsets her she could say "I know you need to pull away at times but it still hurts when you pull away. I'm not saying you are wrong but it is important to me for you to understand what I go through."

How he can be more validating: He says "I understand it hurts when I pull away. It must be very painful for you when I pull away. Let's talk about it." (When she feels heard then it is easier for her to accept his need to pull away at times.)

4. When He Disappoints Her

Her rhetorical question: When he disappoints her, she says "How could you do this?" or "Why can't you do what you say you are going to do?" or "Didn't you say you would do it?" or "When will you ever learn?"

The message he hears: The message he hears is "There is no good reason for disappointing me. You are an idiot. You can't do anything right. I can't be happy until you change!"

What he explains: When she is disappointed with him, he explains "Hey, next time I'll get it right" or "It's not such a big deal" or "But I didn't know what you meant."

The message she hears: What she hears is "If you are upset it is your fault. You should be more flexible. You shouldn't get upset, and I have no empathy for you."

How she can be less disapproving: If she is upset she could say "I don't like being disappointed. I thought you were going to call. It's OK and I need you to know how it feels when you …

How he can be more validating: "He says "I understand I disappointed you. Let's talk about it How did you feel?" Again let her talk. *Give her a chance to be heard* and she will feel better. After a while say to her "What do you need from me now to feel my support?" or "How can I support you now?"

5. When He Doesn't Respect Her Feelings and Hurts Her

Her rhetorical question: When he doesn't respect her feelings and hurts her, she says "How could you say that?" or "How could you treat me this way?" or "Why can't you listen to me?" or "Do you even care about me anymore?" or "Do I treat you this way?"

The message he hears: The message he hears is "You are a bad and abusive person. I am so much more loving than you. I will never forgive you for this. You should be punished and cast out. This is all your fault."

What he explains: When he doesn't respect her feelings and she gets even more upset, he explains "Look, I didn't mean that" or "I do listen to you; see I am doing so right now" or "I don't always ignore you" or "I am not laughing at you."

The message she hears: What she hears is "You have no right to be upset. You are not making any sense. You are too sensitive, something is wrong with you. You are such a burden."

How she can be less disapproving: She could say "I don't like the way you are talking to me. Please stop" or "You are being mean and I don't appreciate it. I want to take a time-out" or "This is not the way I wanted to have this conversation. Let's start over" or "I don't deserve to be treated this way. I want to take a time-out" or "Would you please not interrupt" or "Would you please listen to what I am saying." (A

man can respond best to short and direct statements. Lectures or questions are counterproductive.)

How he can be more validating: He says "I'm sorry, you don't deserve to be treated that way." Take a deep breath and just listen to her response. She may carry on and say something like "You never listen." When she pauses, say "You are right. Sometimes I don't listen. I'm sorry, you don't deserve to be treated that way Let's start over. This time we will do it better." Starting a conversation over is an excellent way to keep an argument from escalating. If she doesn't want to start over don't make her feel wrong. Remember, if you give her the right to be upset then she will be more accepting and approving.

6. When He Is in a Hurry and She Doesn't Like It

Her rhetorical question: She complains "Why are we always in a hurry?" or "Why do you always have to rush places?"

The message he hears: The message he hears is "There is no good reason for this rushing! You never make me happy. Nothing will ever change you. You are incompetent and obviously you don't care about me."

What he explains: He explains "It's not so bad" or "This is the way it has always been" or "There is nothing we can do about it now" or "Don't worry so much; it will be fine."

The message she hears: What she hears is "You have no right to complain. You should be grateful for what you have and not be such a dissatisfied and unhappy person. There is no good reason to complain, you are bringing everyone down."

How she can be less disapproving: If she feels upset she can say "It's OK that we are rushing and I don't like it. It feels like we're always rushing" or "I love it when we are not in a hurry and I hate it sometimes when we have to rush, I just don't like it. Would you plan our next trip with fifteen minutes of extra time?"

How he can be more validating: He says "I don't like it either. I wish we could just slow down. It feels so crazy." In this example he has related to her feelings. Even if a part of him likes to rush, he can best support her in her moment of frustration by expressing how some part of himself sincerely relates to her frustration.

7. When She Feels Invalidated in a Conversatio

Her rhetorical question: When she feels unsupported or invalidated in a conversation, she says "Why did you say that?" or "Why do you have to talk to me this way?" or "Don't you even care about what I'm saying?" or "How can you say that?"

The message he hears: The message he hears is "There is no good reason for treating me this way. Therefore you do not love me. You do not care. I give you so much and you give back nothing!"

What he explains: When she feels invalidated and gets upset, he explains "But you are not making sense" or "But that is not what I said" or "I've heard all this before."

The message she hears: What she hears is "You have no right to be upset. You are irrational and confused. I know what is right and you don't. I am superior to you. You cause these arguments, not me."

How she can be less disapproving: She could say "I don't like what you are saying. It feels as if you are judging me. I don't deserve that. Please understand me" or "I've had a hard day. I know this is not all your fault. And I need you to understand what I'm feeling. OK?" or she can simply overlook his comments and ask for what she wants, saying "I am in such a bad mood, would you listen to me for a while? It will help me feel so much better." (Men need lots of encouragement to listen.)

How he can be more validating: He says "I'm sorry it's not comfortable for you. What are you hearing me say?" By giving her a chance to reflect back what she has heard then he can again say "I'm sorry. I understand why you didn't like it." Then simply pause. This is a time to listen. Resist the temptation to explain to her that she is misinterpreting what you said. Once the hurt is there it needs to be heard if it is to be healed. Explanations are helpful only after the hurt is healed with some validation and caring understanding.

GIVING SUPPORT AT DIFFICULT TIMES

Any relationship has difficult times. They may occur for a variety of reasons, like loss of a job, death, illness, or just not enough rest. At these difficult times the most important thing is to try to communicate with a loving, validating, and approving attitude. In addition we need to accept and understand that we and our partners will not always be perfect. By learning successfully to communicate in response to the smaller upsets in a relationship it becomes easier to deal with the bigger challenges when they suddenly appear.

In each of the above examples I have placed the woman in the role of being upset with the man for something he did or didn't do. Certainly men can also be upset with women, and any of my suggestions listed above apply equally to both sexes. If you are in a relationship, asking your partner how he or she would respond to the suggestions listed above is a useful exercise.

Take some time when you are not upset with your partner to discover what words work best for

them and share what works best for you. Adopting a few "prearranged agreed-upon statements" can be immensely helpful to neutralize tension when conflict arises.

Also, remember that no matter how correct your choice of words, the feeling behind your words counts most. Even if you were to use the exact phrases listed above, if your partner didn't feel your love, validation, and approval the tension would continue to increase. As I mentioned before, sometimes the best solution for avoiding conflict is to see it coming and lie low for a while. Take a time-out to center yourself so that you can then come together again with greater understanding, acceptance, validation, and approval.

Making some of these changes may at first feel awkward or even manipulative. Many people have the idea that love means "saying it like it is." This overly direct approach, however, does not take into account the listener's feelings. One can still be honest and direct about feelings but express them in a way that doesn't offend or hurt. By practicing some of the suggestions listed above, you will be stretching and exercising your ability to communicate in a more caring and trusting manner. After a while it will become more automatic.

If you are presently in a relationship and your partner is attempting to apply some of the above suggestions, keep in mind that they *are* trying to be more supportive. At first their expressions *may* seem not only unnatural but insincere. It is not possible to change a lifetime of conditioning in a few weeks. Be careful to appreciate their every step; otherwise they may quickly give up.

AVOIDING ARGUMENTS THROUGH LOVING COMMUNICATION

Emotionally charged arguments and quarrels can be avoided if we can understand what our partner needs and remember to give it. The following story illustrates how when a woman communicates directly her feelings and when a man validates those feelings an argument can be avoided.

I remember once leaving for a vacation with my wife. As we drove off in the car and could finally relax from a hectic week, I expected Bonnie to be happy that we were going on such a great vacation. Instead she gave a heavy sigh and said, "I feel like my life is a long, slow torture."

I paused, took a deep breath, and then replied, "I know what you mean, I feel like they are squeezing every ounce of life out of me." As I said this I made a motion as if I were wringing the water out of a rag.

Bonnie nodded her head in agreement and to my amazement she suddenly smiled and then changed the subject. She started talking about how excited she was to go on this trip. Six years ago this would not have happened. We would have had an argument and I would have mistakenly blamed it on her.

I would have been upset with her for saying her life was a long, slow torture. I would have taken it personally and felt that she was complaining about me. I would have become defensive and explained that our life was not a torture and that she should be grateful that we were going on such a wonderful vacation. Then we would have argued and had a long, torturous vacation. All this would have happened because I didn't understand and validate her feelings.

This time, I understood she was just expressing a passing feeling. It wasn't a statement about me. Because I understood this I didn't get defensive. By my comment about being wrung out she felt completely validated. In response, she was very accepting of me and I felt her love, acceptance, and approval. Because I have learned to validate her feelings, she got the love she deserved. We didn't have an argument.

10

Scoring Points with the Opposite Sex

A man thinks he scores high with a woman when he does something very big for her, like buying her a new car or taking her on a vacation. He assumes he scores less when he does something small, like opening the car door, buying her a flower, or giving her a hug. Based on this kind of score keeping, he believes he will fulfill her best by focusing his time, energy, and attention into doing something large for her. This formula, however, doesn't work because women keep score differently.

When a woman keeps score, no matter how big or small a gift of love is, it scores one point; each gift has equal value. Its size doesn't matter; it gets a point. A man, however, thinks he scores one point for one small gift and thirty points for a big gift. Since he doesn't understand that women keep score differently, he naturally focuses his energies into one or two big gifts.

When a woman keeps score, no matter how big or small a gift of love is, it scores one point; each gift has equal value.

A man doesn't realize that to a woman the little things are just as important as the big things. In other words, to a woman, a single rose gets as many points as paying the rent on time. Without understanding this basic difference in score keeping, men and women are continually frustrated and disappointed in their relationships.

The following case illustrates this:

> In counseling, Pam said, "I do so much for Chuck and he ignores me. All he cares about is his work."
>
> Chuck said, "But my work pays for our beautiful house and allows us to go on vacations. She should be happy."
>
> Pam replied, "I don't care about this house or the vacations if we are not loving each other. I need more from you."
>
> Chuck said, "You make it sound like you give so much more."
>
> Pam said, "I do. I am always doing things for you. I do the wash, fix the meals, clean the house—everything. You do one thing—you go to work, which does pay the bills. But then you expect me to do everything else."

Chuck is a successful doctor. Like most professionals his work is very time consuming but very

profitable. He couldn't understand why his wife, Pam, was so discontent. He earned a "good living" and he provided a "good life" for his wife and family, but when he came home his wife was unhappy.

In Chuck's mind, the more money he made at work, the less he needed to do at home to fulfill his wife. He thought his hefty paycheck at the end of the month scored him at least thirty points. When he opened his own clinic and doubled his income, he assumed he was now scoring sixty points a month. He had no idea that his paycheck earned him only one point each month with Pam—no matter how big it was.

Chuck did not realize that from Pam's point of view, the more he earned, the less she got. His new clinic required more time and energy. To pick up the slack she began to do even more to manage their personal life and relationship. As she gave more, she felt as if she was scoring about sixty points a month to his one. This made her very unhappy and resentful.

Pam felt she was giving much more and getting less. From Chuck's point of view he was now giving more (sixty points) and should get more from his wife. In his mind the score was even. He was satisfied with their relationship except for one thing—she wasn't happy. He blamed her for wanting too much. To him, his increased paycheck equaled what she was giving. This attitude made Pam even more angry.

After listening to my relationship course on tape, both Pam and Chuck were able to let go of their blame and solve their problem with love. A relationship headed for divorce was transformed.

Chuck learned that doing little things for his wife made a big difference. He was amazed at how quickly things changed when he started devoting more time and energy to her. He began to appreciate that for a woman little things are just as important as big things. He now understood why his work scored only one point.

Actually, Pam had good reason to be unhappy. She truly needed Chuck's personal energy, effort, and attention much more than their wealthy life-style. Chuck discovered that by spending less energy making money and devoting just a little more energy in the right direction his wife would be much happier. He recognized that he had been working longer hours in hopes of making her happier. Once he understood how she kept score, he could come home with a new confidence because he knew how to make her happy.

LITTLE THINGS MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE

There are a variety of ways a man can score points with his partner without having to do much. It is just a matter of redirecting the energy and attention he is already giving. Most men already know about many of these things but don't bother to do them because they don't realize how important the little things are to a woman. A man truly believes the little things are insignificant when compared to the big things he is doing for her.

Some men may start out in a relationship doing the little things, but having done them once or twice they stop. Through some mysterious instinctive force, they begin to focus their energies into doing one big thing for their partners. They then neglect to do all the little things that are necessary for a woman to feel fulfilled in the relationship. To fulfill a woman, a man needs to understand what she needs to feel loved and supported.

The way women score points is not just a preference but a true need. Women need many expressions of love in a relationship to feel loved. One or two expressions of love, no matter how

important, will not, and cannot, fulfill her.

This can be extremely hard for a man to understand. One way to look at it is to imagine that women have a love tank similar to the gas tank on a car. It needs to be filled over and over again. Doing many little things (and scoring many points) is the secret for filling a woman's love tank. A woman feels loved when her love tank is full. She is able to respond with greater love, trust, acceptance, appreciation, admiration, approval, and encouragement. Lots of little things are needed to top off her tank.

Following is a list of 101 of the little ways a man can keep his partner's love tank full.

101 WAYS TO SCORE POINTS WITH A WOMAN

1. Upon returning home find her first before doing anything else and give her a hug.
2. Ask her specific questions about her day that indicate an awareness of what she was planning to do (e.g., "How did your appointment with the doctor go?").
3. Practice listening and asking questions.
4. Resist the temptation to solve her problems—empathize instead.
5. Give her twenty minutes of unsolicited, quality attention (don't read the newspaper or be distracted by anything else during this time).
6. Bring her cut flowers as a surprise as well as on special occasions.
7. Plan a date several days in advance, rather than waiting for Friday night and asking her what she wants to do.
8. If she generally makes dinner or if it is her turn and she seems tired or really busy, offer to make dinner.
9. Compliment her on how she looks.
10. Validate her feelings when she is upset.
11. Offer to help her when she is tired.
12. Schedule extra time when traveling so that she doesn't have to rush.
13. When you are going to be late, call her and let her know.
14. When she asks for support, say yes or no without making her wrong for asking.
15. Whenever her feelings have been hurt, give her some empathy and tell her "I'm sorry you feel hurt." Then be silent; let her feel your understanding of her hurt. Don't offer solutions or explanations why her hurt is not your fault.
16. Whenever you need to pull away, let her know you will be back or that you need some time to think about things.
17. When you've cooled off and you come back, talk about what was bothering you in a respectful, nonblaming way, so she doesn't imagine the worst.
18. Offer to build a fire in wintertime.
19. When she talks to you, put down the magazine or turn off the TV and give her your full attention.
20. If she usually washes the dishes, occasionally offer to wash the dishes, especially if she is tired that day.
21. Notice when she is upset or tired and ask what she has to do. Then offer to help by doing a few of her "to do" items.
22. When going out, ask if there is anything she wants you to pick up at the store, and remember to

pick it up.
23. Let her know when you are planning to take a nap or leave.
24. Give her four hugs a day.

Give her four hugs a day.

25. Call her from work to ask how she is or to share something exciting or to tell her "I love you."
26. Tell her "I love you" at least a couple of times every day.
27. Make the bed and clean up the bedroom.
28. If she washes your socks, turn your socks right side out so she doesn't have to.
29. Notice when the trash is full and offer to empty it.
30. When you are out of town, call to leave a telephone number where you can be reached and to let her know you arrived safely.
31. Wash her car.
32. Wash your car and clean up the interior before a date with her.
33. Wash before having sex or put on a cologne if she likes that.
34. Take her side when she is upset with someone.
35. Offer to give her a back or neck or foot massage (or all three).
36. Make a point of cuddling or being affectionate sometimes without being sexual.
37. Be patient when she is sharing. Don't look at your watch.
38. Don't flick the remote control to different channels when she is watching TV with you.
39. Display affection in public.
40. When holding hands don't let your hand go limp.
41. Learn her favorite drinks so you can offer her a choice of the ones that you know she already likes.
42. Suggest different restaurants for going out; don't put the burden of figuring out where to go on her.
43. Get season tickets for the theater, symphony, opera, ballet, or some other type of performance *she* likes.
44. Create occasions when you both can dress up.
45. Be understanding when she is late or decides to change her outfit.
46. Pay more attention to her than to others in public.
47. Make her more important than the children. Let the children see her getting your attention first and foremost.
48. Buy her little presents—like a small box of chocolates or perfume.
49. Buy her an outfit (take a picture of your partner along with her sizes to the store and let them help you select it).
50. Take pictures of her on special occasions.
51. Take short romantic getaways.
52. Let her see that you carry a picture of her in your wallet and update it from time to time.
53. When staying in a hotel, have them prepare the room with something special, like a bottle of champagne or sparkling apple juice or flowers.
54. Write a note or make a sign on special occasions such as anniversaries and birthdays.

55. Offer to drive the car on long trips.
56. Drive slowly and safely, respecting her preferences. After all, she is sitting powerless in the front seat.
57. Notice how she is feeling and comment on it—"You look happy today" or "You look tired"—and then ask a question like "How was your day?"
58. When taking her out, study in advance the directions so that she does not have to feel responsible to navigate.
59. Take her dancing or take dancing lessons together.
60. Surprise her with a love note or poem.
61. Treat her in ways you did at the beginning of the relationship.
62. Offer to fix something around the house. Say "What needs to be fixed around here? I have some extra time." Don't take on more than you can do.
63. Offer to sharpen her knives in the kitchen.
64. Buy some good Super Glue to fix things that are broken.
65. Offer to change light bulbs as soon as they go out.
66. Help with recycling the trash.
67. Read out loud or cut out sections of the newspaper that would interest her.
68. Write out neatly any phone messages you may take for her.
69. Keep the bathroom floor clean and dry it after taking a shower.
70. Open the door for her.
71. Offer to carry the groceries.
72. Offer to carry heavy boxes for her.
73. On trips, handle the luggage and be responsible for packing it in the car.
74. If she washes the dishes or it is her turn, offer to help scrub pots or other difficult tasks.
75. Make a "to fix" list and leave it in the kitchen. When you have extra time do something on that list for her. Don't let it get too long.
76. When she prepares a meal, compliment her cooking.
77. When listening to her talk, use eye contact.
78. Touch her with your hand sometimes when you talk to her.
79. Show interest in what she does during the day, in the books she reads and the people she relates to.
80. When listening to her, reassure her that you are interested by making little noises like ah ha, uhhuh, oh, mmhuh, and hmmmm.
81. Ask her how she is feeling.
82. If she has been sick in some way, ask for an update and ask how she is doing or feeling.
83. If she is tired offer to make her some tea.
84. Get ready to go to sleep together and get in bed at the same time.
85. Give her a kiss and say good-bye when you leave.
86. Laugh at her jokes and humor.
87. Verbally say thank you when she does things for you.
88. Notice when she gets her hair done and give a reassuring compliment.
89. Create special time to be alone together.
90. Don't answer the phone at intimate moments or if she is sharing vulnerable feelings.
91. Go bicycling together, even if it's just a short ride.
92. Organize and prepare a picnic. (Remember to bring a picnic cloth.)

93. If she handles the laundry, bring the clothes to the cleaners or offer to do the wash.
94. Take her for a walk without the children.
95. Negotiate in a manner that shows her that you want her to get what she wants and you also want what you want. Be caring, but don't be a martyr.
96. Let her know that you missed her when you went away.
97. Bring home her favorite pie or dessert.
98. If she normally shops for the food, offer to do the food shopping.
99. Eat lightly on romantic occasions so that you don't become stuffed and tired later.
100. Ask her to add her thoughts to this list.
101. Leave the bathroom seat down.

THE MAGIC OF DOING LITTLE THINGS

It's magic when a man does little things for his woman. It keeps her love tank full and the score even. When the score is even, or almost even, a woman knows she is loved, which makes her more trusting and loving in return. When a woman knows she's loved, she can love without resentment.

Doing little things for a woman is also healing for a man. In fact, those little things will tend to heal his resentments as well as hers. He begins to feel powerful and effective because she's getting the caring she needs. Both are then fulfilled.

What a Man Needs

Just as men need to continue doing little things for a woman, she needs to be particularly attentive to appreciate the little things he does for her. With a smile and a thanks she can let him know he has scored a point. A man needs this appreciation and encouragement to continue giving. He needs to feel he can make a difference. Men stop giving when they feel they are being taken for granted. A woman needs to let him know that what he is doing is appreciated.

This doesn't mean that she has to pretend that everything is now perfectly wonderful because he has emptied the trash for her. But she can simply notice that he has emptied the trash and say "thanks." Gradually more love will flow from both sides.

What a Man Needs a Woman to Accept

A woman needs to accept a man's instinctive tendencies to focus all his energies into one big thing and minimize the importance of the little things. By accepting this inclination, it will not be as hurtful to her. Rather than resenting him for giving less, she can constructively work with him to solve the problem. She can repeatedly let him know how much she appreciates the little things he has done for her and that he works hard and attentively.

She can remember that his forgetting to do the little things doesn't mean he doesn't love her but that he has become too focused on big things again. Instead of fighting him or punishing him, she can encourage his personal involvement by asking for his support. With more appreciation and encouragement a man will gradually learn to value the little things as well as the big. He will become

less driven to be more and more successful and begin to relax more and spend more time with his wife and family.

REDIRECTING ENERGY AND ATTENTION

I remember when I first learned to redirect my energies into the little things. When Bonnie and I were first married, I was almost a workaholic. In addition to writing books and teaching seminars, I had a counseling practice for fifty hours a week. In the first year of our marriage, she let me know again and again how much she needed more time with me. Repeatedly she would share her feelings of abandonment and hurt.

Sometimes she would share her feelings in a letter. We call this a Love Letter. It always ends with love and includes feelings of anger, sadness, fear, and sorrow. In chapter 11 we will explore more deeply the methods and importance of writing these Love Letters. She wrote this Love Letter about my spending too much time at work.

Dear John,

I'm writing you this letter to share with you my feelings. I don't mean to tell you what to do. I just want you to understand my feelings.

I am angry that you spend so much time at work. I am angry that you come home with nothing left for me. I want to spend more time with you.

It hurts to feel like you care more about your clients than me. I feel sad that you are so tired. I miss you.

I'm afraid you don't want to spend time with me. I am afraid of being another burden in your life. I am afraid of sounding like a nag. I am afraid my feelings are not important to you.

I'm sorry if this is hard to hear. I know you are doing your best. I appreciate how hard you work.

I love you, Bonnie

After reading about her feeling neglected I realized that I truly was giving more to my clients than I was to her. I would give my undivided attention to my clients and then come home exhausted and ignore my wife.

When a Man Overworks

I was ignoring her not because I didn't love her or care for her but because I had nothing left to give. I naïvely thought I was doing the best thing by working hard to provide a better life (more money) for her and our family. Once I understood how she felt, I developed a plan for solving this problem in our relationship.

Instead of seeing eight clients a day I started seeing seven. I pretended that my wife was my eighth client. Every night I came home an hour earlier. I pretended in my mind that my wife was my most important client. I started giving her that devoted and undivided attention I would give a client. When I arrived home I started doing little things for her. The success of this plan was immediate. Not only

was she happier but I was too.

Gradually, as I felt being loved for the ways I could support her and our family, I became less driven to be a great success. I started to slow down, and to my surprise not only our relationship but also my work flourished, becoming more successful without my having to work as hard.

I found that when I was succeeding at home, my work reflected that success. I realized that success in the work world was not achieved through hard work alone. It was also dependent on my ability to inspire trust in others. When I felt loved by my family, not only did I feel more confident, but others also trusted and appreciated me more.

How a Woman Can Help

Bonnie's support played a big part in this change. In addition to sharing her honest and loving feelings, she was also very persistent in asking me to do things for her and then giving me a lot of appreciation when I did them. Gradually, I started to realize how wonderful it is to be loved for doing little things. I was relieved from feeling that I had to do great things to be loved. It was a revelation.

WHEN WOMEN GIVE POINTS

Woman possess the special ability to appreciate the little things of life as much as the big things. This is a blessing for men. Most men strive for greater and greater success because they believe it will make them worthy of love. Deep inside, they crave love and admiration from others. They do not know that they can draw that love and admiration to them without having to be a greater success.

Most men strive for greater and greater success because they believe it will make them worthy of love.

A woman has the ability to heal a man of this addiction to success by appreciating the little things he does. But she may not express appreciation if she doesn't understand how important it is to a man. She may let her resentment get in the way.

HEALING THE RESENTMENT FLU

Women instinctively appreciate the little things. The only exceptions are when a woman doesn't realize a man needs to hear her appreciation or when she feels the score is uneven. When a woman feels unloved and neglected it is hard for her automatically to appreciate what a man does do for her. She feels resentful because she has given so much more than he has. This resentment blocks her ability to appreciate the little things.

Resentment, like getting the flu or a cold, is not healthy. When a woman is sick with resentment she

tends to negate what a man has done for her because, according to the way a woman keeps score, she has done so much more.

When the score is forty to ten in favor of the woman, she may begin to feel very resentful. Something happens to a woman when she feels she is giving more than she is getting. Quite unconsciously she subtracts his score of ten from her score of forty and concludes the score in their relationship is thirty to zero. This makes sense mathematically and is understandable, but it doesn't work.

When she subtracts his score from her score he ends up with a zero, and he is not a zero. He has not given zero; he has given ten. When he comes home she has a coldness in her eyes or in her voice that says he is a zero. She is negating what he has done. She reacts to him as if he has given nothing—but he has given ten.

The reason a woman tends to reduce a man's points this way is because she feels unloved. The unequal score makes her feel that she isn't important. Feeling unloved, she finds it very difficult to appreciate even the ten points he can legitimately claim. Of course, this isn't fair, but it is how it works.

What generally happens in a relationship at this point is the man feels unappreciated and loses his motivation to do more. He catches the resentment flu. She then continues to feel more resentful, and the situation gets worse and worse. Her resentment flu gets worse.

What She Can Do

The way of solving this problem is to understand it compassionately from both sides. He needs to be appreciated, while she needs to feel supported. Otherwise their sickness gets worse.

The solution to this resentment is for her to take responsibility. She needs to take responsibility for having contributed to her problem by giving more and letting the score get so uneven. She needs to treat herself as if she has the flu or a cold and take a rest from giving so much in the relationship. She needs to pamper herself and allow her partner to take care of her more.

When a woman feels resentful, she usually will not give her partner a chance to be supportive, or, if he tries, she will negate the value of what he has done and give him another zero. She closes the door to his support. By taking responsibility for giving too much, she can give up blaming him for the problem and start a new scorecard. She can give him another chance and, with her new understanding, improve the situation.

What He Can Do

When a man feels unappreciated, he stops giving support. A way he can responsibly deal with the situation is to understand that it is hard for her to give points for his support and appreciate him when she is sick with resentment.

He can release his own resentment by understanding that she needs to receive for a while before she can give again. He can remember this as he attentively gives his love and affection in little ways. For a while he should not expect her to be as appreciative as he deserves and needs. It helps if he takes responsibility for giving her the flu because he neglected to do the little things that she needs.

With this foresight he can give without expecting much in return until she recovers from her flu. Knowing that he can solve this problem will help him release his resentment as well. If he continues giving and she focuses on taking a rest from giving and focuses on receiving his support with love, the balance can be quickly restored.

WHY MEN GIVE LESS

A man rarely intends to take more and give less. Yet men are notorious for giving less in relationships. Probably you have experienced this in your relationships. Women commonly complain that their male partner starts out more loving and then gradually becomes passive. Men also feel unfairly treated. In the beginning women are so appreciative and loving, and then they become resentful and demanding. This mystery can be understood when we realize how men and women keep score differently.

There are five major reasons a man stops giving. They are:

1. ***Martians Idealize Fairness.*** A man focuses all his energies into a project at work and thinks he has just scored fifty points. Then he comes home and sits back, waiting for his wife to score her fifty points. He does not know that in her experience he has only scored one point. He stops giving because he thinks he has already given more.

In his mind this is the fair and loving thing to do. He allows her to give fifty points worth of support to even the score. He doesn't realize that his hard work at the office scores only one point. His model of fairness can work only when he understands and respects how women give one point for each gift of love. This first insight has practical applications for both men and women. They are:

For Men: Remember that for a woman, big things *and* little things score one point. All gifts of love are equal and equally needed—big and small. To avoid creating resentment, practice doing some of the little things that make a big difference. Do not expect a woman to be satisfied unless she gets an abundance of little expressions of love as well as the big.

For Women: Remember that men are from Mars; they are not automatically motivated to do the little things. They give less not because they do not love you but because they believe they have already given their share. Try not to take it personally. Instead, repeatedly encourage their support by asking for more. Don't wait until you desperately need his support or until the score is greatly uneven to ask. Don't demand his support; trust that he wants to support you, even if he needs a little encouragement.

2. ***Venusians Idealize Unconditional Love.*** A woman gives as much as she can and only notices that she has received less when she is empty and spent. Women don't start out keeping score like men do; women give freely and assume men will do the same.

As we have seen, men are not the same. A man gives freely until the score, as he perceives it, gets uneven, and then he stops giving. A man generally gives a lot and then sits back to receive what he has given.

When a woman is happy giving to a man, he instinctively assumes she is keeping score and he must have more points. The last thing he would consider is that he has given less. From his vantage point he would never continue giving when the score became uneven in his favor.

He knows that if he is required to give more when he feels he has already given a greater amount, he will definitely not smile when he gives. Keep this in mind. When a woman continues to give freely with a smile on her face, a man assumes the score must be somewhat even. He does not realize that Venusians have the uncanny ability to give happily until the score is about thirty to zero. These insights also have practical applications for both men and women:

For Men: Remember that when a woman gives with a smile on her face it doesn't necessarily mean the score is close to even.

For Women: Remember that when you give freely to a man, he gets the message the score is even. If you want to motivate him to give more, then gently and gracefully stop giving more. Allow him to do little things for you. Encourage him by asking for his support in little ways and then appreciating him.

3. ***Martians Give When They Are Asked.*** Martians pride themselves in being self-sufficient. They don't ask for help unless they really need it. On Mars it is rude to offer help unless you are first asked.

Quite the opposite, Venusians don't wait to offer their support. When they love someone, they give in any way they can. They do not wait to be asked, and the more they love someone the more they give.

When a man doesn't offer his support a woman mistakenly assumes he doesn't love her. She may even test his love by definitely not asking for his support and waiting for him to offer it. When he doesn't offer to help, she resents him. She does not understand that he is waiting to be asked.

As we have seen, keeping the score even is important to a man. When a man feels he has given more in a relationship, he will instinctively begin to ask for more support; he naturally feels more entitled to receive and starts asking for more. On the other hand, when he has given less in a relationship, the last thing he is going to do is ask for more. Instinctively he will not ask for support but will look for ways that he might give more support.

When a woman doesn't ask for support, a man mistakenly assumes the score must be even or that he must be giving more. He does not know that she is waiting for him to offer his support.

This third insight has practical applications for both men and women.

For Women: Remember that a man looks for cues telling him when and how to give more. He waits to be asked. He seems to get the necessary feedback only when she is asking for more or telling him he needs to give more. In addition, when she asks, he knows what to give. Many men don't know what to do. Even if a man senses he is giving less, unless she specifically asks for support in the little ways, he may devote even more of his energy to big things like work, thinking that greater success or more money will help.

For Men: Remember that a woman instinctively does not ask for support when she wants it. Instead, she expects you to offer it if you love her. Practice offering to support her in little ways.

4. ***Venusians Say Yes Even When the Score Is Uneven.*** Men don't realize that when they ask for support, a woman will say yes even if the score is uneven. If they can support their man, they will. The concept of keeping score is not on her mind. Men have to be careful not to ask for too much. If she feels she is giving more than she is getting, after a while she will resent that you do not offer to support her more.

Men mistakenly assume that as long as she says yes to his needs and requests, she is receiving equally what she wants. He mistakenly assumes the score is even when it isn't.

I remember taking my wife to the movies about once a week for the first two years of our marriage. One day she became furious with me and said, "We always do what you want to do. We never do what I want to do."

I was genuinely surprised. I thought that as long as she said yes and continued to say yes that she was equally happy with the situation. I thought she liked the movies as much as I did.

Occasionally she would suggest to me that the opera was in town or that she would like to go to the symphony. When we drove by the local playhouse, she would make a remark like "That looks like fun, let's see that play."

But then later in the week I would say, "Let's go to this movie, it's got a great review."

And she would happily say, "OK."

Mistakenly, I got the message that she was as happy as I was about going to the movies. In truth she was happy to be with me, the movie was OK, but what *she* wanted was to go to the local cultural events. That is why she kept mentioning them to me. But because she kept saying yes to the movies, I had no idea that she was sacrificing her wants to make me happy.

This insight has practical applications for both men and women.

For Men: Remember that if she says yes to your requests, it doesn't mean the score is even. The score may be twenty to zero in her mind and she will still happily say "Sure I'll pick up your clothes at the cleaners" or "OK, I'll make that call for you."

Agreeing to doing what you want doesn't mean that it is what she wants. Ask her what she wants to do. Collect information about what she likes, and then offer to take her to those places.

For Women: Remember that if you immediately say yes to a man's requests, he gets the idea that he has given more or that the score is at least even. If you are giving more and getting less, stop saying yes to his requests. Instead, in a graceful way, begin asking him to do more for you.

5. ***Martians Give Penalty Points.*** Women don't realize that men give penalty points when they feel unloved and unsupported. When a woman reacts to a man in an untrusting, rejecting, disapproving, or unappreciative way, he gives minus or penalty points.

For example, if a man feels hurt or unloved because his wife has failed to appreciate something he's done, he feels justified in taking away the points she has already earned. If she has given ten, when he feels hurt by her, he may react to her by taking away her ten points. If he is more hurt he may even give her a negative twenty. As a result she now owes him ten points, when a minute before she had ten points.

This is very confusing to a woman. She may have given the equivalent of thirty points, and then in one angry moment he takes them away. In his mind he feels justified in not giving anything because she owes him. He thinks it is fair. This may be fair mathematically, but it is not really fair.

Penalty points are destructive to relationships. They make a woman feel unappreciated and a man less giving. If he negates in his mind all the loving support she has given, when she does express some negativity, which is bound to happen occasionally, he then loses his motivation to give. He becomes passive. This fifth insight has practical applications for both men and women.

For Men: Remember that penalty points are not fair and do not work. At moments when you feel

unloved, offended, or hurt, forgive her and remember all the good she has given rather than penalize her by negating it all. Instead of punishing her, ask her for the support you want, and she will give it. Respectfully let her know how she has hurt you. Let her know how she has hurt you and then give her an opportunity to apologize. Punishment does not work! You will feel much better by giving her a chance to give you what you need. Remember she is a Venusian—she doesn't know what you need or how she hurts you.

For Women: Remember that men have this tendency to give penalty points. There are two approaches to protect yourself from this abuse.

The first approach is to recognize that he is wrong in taking away your points. In a respectful way let him know how you feel. In the next chapter we will explore ways to express difficult or negative feelings.

The second approach is to recognize he takes away points when he feels unloved and hurt and he immediately gives them back when he feels loved and supported. As he feels more and more loved for the little things he does, he will gradually give penalty points less and less. Try to understand the different ways he needs love so that he doesn't get hurt as much.

When you are able to recognize how he has been hurt, let him know that you are sorry. Most important, then give him the love he didn't get. If he feels unappreciated, give him the appreciation he needs; if he feels rejected or manipulated, give him the acceptance he needs; if he feels mistrusted, give him the trust he needs; if he feels put down, give him the admiration that he needs; if he feels disapproval, give him the approval he needs and deserves. When a man feels loved he will quit using penalty points.

The most difficult part of the above process is knowing what hurt him. For the most part, when a man withdraws into his cave, he doesn't know what hurt him. Then, when he comes out, he generally doesn't talk about it. How is a woman supposed to know what actually hurts his feelings? Reading this book and understanding how men need love differently is a good beginning and gives you an edge that women have never had before.

The other way a woman can learn what happened is through communication. As I have mentioned before, the more a woman is able to open up and share her feelings in a respectful way, the more a man is able to learn to open up and share his hurt and pain.

HOW MEN GIVE POINTS

Men give points differently from women. Every time a woman appreciates what a man has done for her, he feels loved and gives her a point in return. To keep the score even in a relationship, a man really doesn't require anything but love. Women don't realize the power of their love and many times unnecessarily seek to earn a man's love by doing more things for him than they want to do.

When a woman appreciates what a man does for her, he gets much of the love he needs. Remember, men primarily need appreciation. Certainly a man also requires equal participation from a woman in doing the domestic duties of day to-day life, but if he is not appreciated, then her contribution is nearly meaningless and completely unimportant to him.

Certainly a man also requires equal participation from a woman in doing the domestic duties of day-to-day life, but if he is not appreciated, then her contribution is nearly meaningless and completely unimportant to him.

Similarly, a woman cannot appreciate the big things a man does for her unless he is also doing a lot of little things. Doing a lot of little things fulfills her primary needs to feel cared for, understood, and respected.

A major source of love for a man is the loving reaction that a woman has to his behavior. He has a love tank too, but his is not necessarily filled by what she does for him. Instead it is mainly filled by how she reacts to him or how she feels about him.

When a woman prepares a meal for a man, he gives her one point or ten points, depending on how she is feeling toward him. If a woman secretly resents a man, a meal she may cook for him will mean very little to him—he may even give minus points because she was resenting him. The secret to fulfilling a man lies in learning to express love through your feelings, not necessarily through your actions.

Philosophically speaking, when a woman feels loving, her behavior will automatically express that love. When a man expresses himself in loving behavior, automatically his feelings will follow and become more loving.

Even if a man is not feeling his love for a woman, he can still decide to do something loving for her. If his offering is received and appreciated, then he will begin to feel his love for her again. "Doing" is an excellent way to prime a man's love pump.

However, women are very different. A woman generally does not feel loved if she doesn't feel cared about, understood, or respected. Making a decision to do something more for her partner will not help her feel more loving. Instead it may actually fuel her resentment. When a woman is not feeling her loving feelings, she needs to focus her energies directly on healing her negative feelings and definitely not on doing more.

A man needs to prioritize "loving behavior," for this will ensure that his partner's love needs are met. It will open her heart and also open his heart to feel more loving. A man's heart opens as he succeeds in fulfilling a woman.

A woman needs to prioritize "loving attitudes and feelings," which will ensure that her partner's love needs are fulfilled. As a woman is able to express loving attitudes and feelings toward a man, he feels motivated to give more. This then assists her in opening her heart even more. A woman's heart opens more as she is able to get the support she needs.

Women are sometimes unaware of when a man really needs love. At such times a woman can score twenty to thirty points. These are some examples:

What happens: 1. He makes a mistake and she doesn't say "I told you so" or offer advice.

Points he gives her: 10–20

What happens: 2. He disappoints her and she doesn't punish him.

Points he gives her: 10–20

What happens: 3. He gets lost while driving and she doesn't make a big deal out of it.

Points he gives her: 10–20

What happens: 4. He gets lost and she sees the good in the situation and says "We would never have seen this beautiful sunset if we had taken the most direct route."

Points he gives her: 20–30

What happens: 5. He forgets to pick up something and she says "It's OK. Would you do it next time you are out?"

Points he gives her: 10–20

What happens: 6. He forgets to pick up something again and she says with trusting patience and persistence "It's OK. Would you still get it?"

Points he gives her: 20–30

What happens: 7. When she has hurt him and she understands his hurt, she apologizes and gives him the love he needs.

Points he gives her: 10–40

What happens: 8. She asks for his support and he says no and she is not hurt by his rejection but trusts that he would if he could. She does not reject him or disapprove of him.

Points he gives her: 10–20

What happens: 9. Another time she asks for his support and he again says no. She does not make him feel wrong but accepts his limitations at that time.

Points he gives her: 20–30

What happens: 10. She asks for his support without being demanding when he assumes the score is somewhat even.

Points he gives her: 1–5

What happens: 11. She asks for support without being demanding when she is upset or he knows she has been giving more.

Points he gives her: 10–30

What happens: 12. When he withdraws she doesn't make him feel

guilty.

Points he gives her: 10–20

What happens: 13. When he comes back from his cave she welcomes him and doesn't punish him or reject him.

Points he gives her: 10–20

What happens: 14. When he apologizes for a mistake and she receives it with loving acceptance and forgiveness. The bigger the mistake he makes the more points he gives.

Points he gives her: 10–50

What happens: 15. When he asks her to do something and she says no without giving a list of reasons why she can't do it.

Points he gives her: 1–10

What happens: 16. When he asks her to do something and she says yes and stays in a good mood.

Points he gives her: 1–10

What happens: 17. When he wants to make up after a fight and starts doing little things for her and she starts appreciating him again.

Points he gives her: 10–30

What happens: 18. She is happy to see him when he gets home.

Points he gives her: 10–20

What happens: 19. She feels disapproving and instead of expressing it she goes in another room and privately centers herself and then comes back with a more centered and loving heart.

Points he gives her: 10-20

What happens: 20. On special occasions she overlooks his mistakes that might normally upset her.

Points he gives her: 20–40

What happens: 21. She really enjoys having sex with him.

Points he gives her: 10–40

What happens: 22. He forgets where he put his keys and she doesn't look at him as though he was irresponsible.

Points he gives her: 10–20

What happens: 23. She is tactful or graceful in expressing her dislike or disappointment about a restaurant or movie when on a date.

Points he gives her: 10–20

What happens: 24. She doesn't give advice when he is driving or parking the car and then appreciates him for getting them there.

Points he gives her: 10–20

What happens: 25. She asks for his support rather than dwelling on what he has done wrong.

Points he gives her: 10–20

What happens: 26. She shares her negative feelings in a centered way without blaming, rejecting, or being disapproving of him.

Points he gives her: 10–40

When a Woman Can Score More Points

Each of the above examples reveals how men score points differently from women. But a woman is not required to do all of the above. This list reveals those times when he is most vulnerable. If she can be supportive in giving him what he needs he will be very generous in giving points.

As I mentioned in chapter 7, a woman's ability to give love at difficult times fluctuates like a wave. When a woman's ability to give love is increasing (during the upswing of her wave) is the time when she can score many bonus points. She should not expect herself to be as loving at other times.

Just as a woman's ability to give love fluctuates, a man's need for love fluctuates. In each of the above examples, there is no fixed amount for how many points a man gives. Instead there is an approximate range; when his need for her love is greater he tends to give her more points.

For example, if he has made a mistake and feels embarrassed, sorry, or ashamed, then he needs her love more; therefore he gives more points if she responds by being supportive. The bigger the mistake, the more points he gives her for her love. If he doesn't receive her love he tends to give her penalty points according to how much he needed her love. If he feels rejected as the result of a big mistake he may give a lot of penalty points.

If a man has made a mistake and feels embarrassed, sorry, or ashamed, then he needs her love more…. The bigger the mistake, the more points he gives.

WHAT MAKES MEN DEFENSIVE

A man may become so angry at a woman when he has made the mistake and the woman is upset. His upset is proportional to the size of his mistake. A little mistake makes him less defensive, while a big mistake makes him much more defensive. Sometimes women wonder why a man doesn't say he is sorry for a big mistake. The answer is he is afraid of not being forgiven. It is too painful to acknowledge that he has failed her in some way. Instead of saying he is sorry he may become angry with her for being upset and give *her* penalty points.

When a man is in a negative state, treat him like a passing tornado and lie low.

When a man is in a negative state, if she can treat him like a passing tornado and lie low, after the tornado has passed he will give her an abundance of bonus points for not making him wrong or for not trying to change him. If she tries to stop the tornado it will create havoc, and he will blame her for interfering.

This is a new insight for many women because on Venus when someone is upset the Venusians never ignore her or even consider lying low. Tornadoes don't exist on Venus. When someone is upset everyone gets involved with one another and tries to understand what is bothering her by asking a lot of questions. When a tornado passes on Mars everyone finds a ditch and lies low.

WHEN MEN GIVE PENALTY POINTS

It helps greatly when women understand that men score points differently. That men give penalty points is very confusing to women and doesn't make it safe for women to share their feelings. Certainly, it would be wonderful if all men could see how unfair penalty points are and change overnight—but change takes time. What can be reassuring for a woman, however, is to know that just as a man quickly gives out the penalty points he also takes them back.

A man giving penalty points is similar to a woman feeling resentful when she gives more than he does. She subtracts his score from hers and gives him a zero. At such times a man can just be understanding that she is sick with the resentment flu and give her some extra love.

Similarly, when a man is giving penalty points, a woman can realize that he has his own version of resentment flu. He needs some extra love so he can get better. As a result, he immediately gives her bonus points to even the score again.

Through learning how to score big with a man, a woman has a new edge for supporting her man when he seems distant and hurt. Instead of doing little things for him (from the list 101 Ways to Score Points with a Woman, page 203), which is what she would want, she can more successfully focus her energies in giving him what he wants (as listed in How Women Can Score Big with Men, page 225).

REMEMBERING OUR DIFFERENCES

Both men and women can benefit greatly by remembering how differently we keep score. Improving a relationship takes no more energy than we are already expending and doesn't have to be terribly difficult. Relationships are exhausting until we learn how to direct our energies into the ways that our partner can fully appreciate.

How to Communicate Difficult Feelings

When we are upset, disappointed, frustrated, or angry it is difficult to communicate lovingly. When negative emotions come up, we tend momentarily to lose our loving feelings of trust, caring, understanding, acceptance, appreciation, and respect. At such times, even with the best intentions, talking turns into fighting. In the heat of the moment, we do not remember how to communicate in a way that works for our partner or for us.

At times like these, women unknowingly tend to blame men and make them feel guilty for their actions. Instead of remembering that her partner is doing the best he can, a woman could assume the worst and sound critical and resentful. When she feels a surge of negative feelings, it is especially difficult for a woman to speak in a trusting, accepting, and appreciative way. She doesn't realize how negative and hurtful her attitude is to her partner.

When men become upset, they tend to become judgmental of women and women's feelings. Instead of remembering that his partner is vulnerable and sensitive, a man may forget her needs and sound mean and uncaring. When he feels a surge of negative feelings, it is especially difficult for him to speak in a caring, understanding, and respectful way. He doesn't realize how hurtful his negative attitude is to her.

These are the times when talking does not work. Fortunately, there is another alternative. Instead of verbally sharing your feelings with your partner, write him or her a letter. Writing letters allows you to listen to your own feelings without worrying about hurting your partner. By freely expressing and listening to your own feelings, you automatically become more centered and loving. As men write letters they become more caring, understanding, and respectful; as women write letters they become more trusting, accepting, and appreciative.

Writing out your negative feelings is an excellent way to become aware of how unloving you may sound. With this greater awareness you can adjust your approach. In addition, by writing out your negative emotions their intensity can be released, making room for positive feelings to be felt again. Having become more centered, you can then go to your partner and speak to him or her in a more loving way—a way that is less judgmental or blaming. As a result, your chances of being understood and accepted are much greater.

After writing your letter you may no longer feel a need to talk. Instead you could become inspired to do something loving for your partner. Whether you share the feelings in your letter or you just write a letter to feel better, writing down your feelings is an important tool.

Whether you share the feelings in your letter or you just write a letter to feel better, writing

down your feelings is an essential tool.

Instead of writing down your feelings you may also choose to do the same process in your mind. Simply refrain from talking and review what happened in your mind. In your imagination imagine you are saying what you feel, think, and want—without editing yourself in any way. By carrying on an inner dialogue expressing the complete truth about your inner feelings, you will suddenly become free from their negative grip. Whether you write down your feelings or do it mentally, by exploring, feeling, and expressing your negative feelings they lose their power and positive feelings reemerge. The Love Letter Technique increases the power and effectiveness of this process tremendously. Although it is a writing technique, it can also be done mentally as well.

THE LOVE LETTER TECHNIQUE

One of the best ways to release negativity and then communicate in a more loving fashion is to use the Love Letter Technique. Through writing out your feelings in a particular manner, the negative emotions automatically lessen and the positive feelings increase. The Love Letter Technique enhances the letter writing process. There are three aspects or parts to the Love Letter Technique:

1. Write a Love Letter expressing your feelings of anger, sadness, fear, regret, and love.

2. Write a Response Letter expressing what you want to hear from your partner.

3. Share your Love Letter and Response Letter with your partner.

The Love Letter Technique is quite flexible. You may choose to do all three steps, or you may only need to do one or two of them. For example, you might practice steps one and two in order to feel more centered and loving and then have a verbal conversation with your partner without being overwhelmed with resentment or blame. At other times you may choose to do all three steps and share your Love Letter and Response Letter with your partner.

To do all three steps is a powerful and healing experience for both of you. However sometimes doing all three steps is too time consuming or inappropriate. In some situations, the most powerful technique is to do just step one and write a Love Letter. Let's explore a few examples of how to write a Love Letter.

STEP 1: WRITING A LOVE LETTER

To write a Love Letter, find a private spot and write a letter to your partner. In each Love Letter express your feelings of anger, sadness, fear, regret, and then love. This format allows you fully to express and understand all your feelings. As a result of understanding all your feelings you will then be able to communicate to your partner in a more loving and centered way.

When we are upset we generally have many feelings at once. For example, when your partner disappoints you, you may feel *angry* that he is being insensitive, angry that she is being

unappreciative; *sad* that he is so preoccupied with his work, sad that she doesn't seem to trust you; *afraid* that she will never forgive you, afraid that he doesn't care as much about you; *sorry* that you are secretly withholding your love from him or her. But at the same time you *love* that he or she is your partner and you want his or her love and attention.

To find our loving feelings, many times we need first to feel all our negative feelings. After expressing these four levels of negative feelings (anger, sadness, fear, and regret), we can fully feel and express our loving feelings. Writing Love Letters automatically lessens the intensity of our negative feelings and allows us to experience more fully our positive feelings. Here are some guidelines for writing a basic Love Letter:

1. Address the letter to your partner. Pretend that he or she is listening to you with love and understanding.

2. Start with anger, then sadness, then fear, then regret, and then love. Include all five sections in each letter.

3. Write a few sentences about each feeling; keep each section approximately the same length. Speak in simple terms.

4. After each section, pause and notice the next feeling coming up. Write about that feeling.

5. Do not stop your letter until you get to the love. Be patient and wait for the love to come out.

6. Sign your name at the end. Take a few moments to think about what you need or want. Write it in a P.S.

To simplify writing your letters you may wish to make copies of page 238 to use as a guide in writing your own Love Letters. In each of the five sections a few helpful lead-in phrases are included to help you express your feelings. You may use just a few of these phrases or all of them. Generally the most releasing expressions are: "I am angry," "I am sad," "I am afraid," "I am sorry," "I want," and "I love." However, any phrases that assist you in expressing your feelings will work. It usually takes about twenty minutes to complete a Love Letter.

A Love Letter

*Dear*_____ *Date*_____

I am writing this letter to share my feelings with you.

1. **For Anger**

- I don't like it …
- I feel frustrated …

- I am angry that …
- I feel annoyed …
- I want …

2. **For Sadness**

- I feel disappointed …
- I am sad that …
- I feel hurt …
- I wanted …
- I want …

3. **For Fear**

- I feel worried …
- I am afraid …
- I feel scared …
- I do not want …
- I need …
- I want …

4. **For Regret**

- I feel embarrassed …
- I am sorry …
- I feel ashamed …
- I didn't want …
- I want …

5. **For Love**

- I love …
- I want …
- I understand …
- I forgive …
- I appreciate …
- I thank you for …
- I know …

P.S. The response I would like to hear from you:

Here are some typical situations and some sample Love Letters that will help you understand the technique.

A Love Letter About Forgetfulness

When Tom napped longer than he'd planned and forgot to take his daughter Hayley to the dentist, his wife, Samantha, was furious. Instead of confronting Tom with her anger and disapproval, however, she sat down and wrote the following Love Letter. Afterward she was able to approach Tom in a more centered and accepting way.

Because she wrote this letter, Samantha did not feel an urge to lecture or reject her husband. Instead of having an argument they enjoyed a loving evening. The next week Tom made sure Hayley got to the dentist.

This is Samantha's Love Letter:

Dear Tom,

1. Anger: *I am furious that you forgot. I am angry that you overslept. I hate it when you take naps and forget everything. I am tired of feeling responsible for everything. You expect me to do everything. I am tired of this.*

2. Sadness: *I am sad that Hayley missed her appointment. I am sad that you forgot. I am sad because I feel like I can't rely on you. I am sad that you have to work so hard. I am sad that you are so tired. I am sad that you have less time for me. I feel hurt when you are not excited to see me. I feel hurt when you forget things. I feel like you don't care.*

3. Fear: *I am afraid I have to do everything. I am afraid to trust you. I am afraid that you don't care. I am afraid I will have to be responsible next time. I don't want to do everything. I need your help. I am afraid to need you. I am afraid you will never be responsible. I am afraid you are working too hard. I am afraid you may get sick.*

4. Regret: *I feel embarrassed when you miss appointments. I feel embarrassed when you are late. I am sorry that I am so demanding. I am sorry that I am not more accepting. I feel ashamed that I am not more loving. I don't want to reject you.*

5. Love: *I love you. I understand that you were tired. You work so hard. I know you are doing your best. I forgive you for forgetting. Thank you for making another appointment. Thank you for wanting to take Hayley to the dentist. I know you really do care. I know you love me. I feel so lucky to have you in my life. I want to have a loving evening with you.*

Love, Samantha

P.S. I need to hear that you will be responsible to take Hayley next week to the dentist.

A Love Letter About Indifference

Jim was leaving the next morning for a business trip. That evening, his wife, Virginia, attempted to create some intimacy. She brought a mango into their bedroom and offered him some. Jim was preoccupied reading a book in bed and briefly commented that he wasn't hungry. Virginia felt

rejected and left. Inside she was hurt and angry. Instead of coming back and complaining about his rudeness and insensitivity, she wrote a Love Letter.

After writing this letter, Virginia, feeling more accepting and forgiving, went back into the bedroom and said, "This is our last night before you leave, let's spend some special time together." Jim put down his book and they had a delightful, intimate evening. Writing a Love Letter gave Virginia the strength and love to persist more directly in getting her partner's attention. She did not even need to share her Love Letter with her partner.

This is her letter:

Dear Jim,

1. Anger: *I am frustrated that you want to read a book and this is our last evening together before you leave. I am angry that you ignore me. I am angry that you do not want to spend this time with me. I am angry that we don't spend more time together. There is always something more important than me. I want to feel you love me.*

2. Sadness: *I am sad that you don't want to be with me. I am sad that you work so hard. I feel like you wouldn't even notice if I wasn't here. I am sad that you are always so busy. I am sad that you don't want to talk with me. I feel hurt that you do not care. I don't feel special.*

3. Fear: *I am afraid you don't even know why I am upset. I am afraid you don't care. I am afraid of sharing my feelings with you. I am afraid you will reject me. I am afraid we are drifting further apart. I am scared that I can't do anything about it. I am afraid that I am boring to you. I am afraid that you don't like me.*

4. Regret: *I feel so embarrassed wanting to spend time with you when you don't even care. I feel embarrassed getting so upset. I am sorry if this sounds demanding. I am sorry that I am not more loving and accepting. I am sorry that I was cold when you didn't want to spend time with me. I am sorry that I didn't give you another chance. I am sorry that I stop trusting your love.*

5. Love: *I do love you. That's why I brought the mango. I wanted to do something to please you. I wanted to spend some special time together. I still want to have a special evening. I forgive you for being so indifferent to me. I forgive you for not responding right away. I understand that you were in the middle of reading something. Let's have a loving intimate evening.*

I love you, Virginia

P.S. The response I would like to hear: "I love you, Virginia, and I also want to spend a loving evening with you. I am going to miss you."

A Love Letter About Arguing

Michael and Vanessa disagreed about a financial decision. Within a few minutes they got into an

argument. When Michael noticed that he was starting to yell he stopped yelling, took a deep breath, and then said, "I need some time to think about this and then we will talk." Then he went into another room and wrote out his feelings in a Love Letter.

After writing the letter he was able to go back and discuss the matter in a more understanding way. As a result they were able lovingly to resolve their problem.

This is his Love Letter:

Dear Vanessa,

1. Anger: *I am angry that you get so emotional. I am angry that you keep misunderstanding me. I am angry that you can't stay calm when we talk. I am angry that you are so sensitive and easily hurt. I am angry that you mistrust and reject me.*

2. Sadness: *I am sad that we are arguing. It hurts to feel your doubts and mistrust. It hurts to lose your love. I am sad that we fought. I am sad that we disagree.*

3. Fear: *I am afraid of making a mistake. I am afraid I can't do what I want to do without upsetting you. I am afraid to share my feelings. I am afraid you will make me wrong. I am afraid of looking incompetent. I am afraid you do not appreciate me. I am afraid to talk with you when you are so upset. I don't know what to say.*

4. Regret: *I am sorry I hurt you. I am sorry I don't agree with you. I am sorry that I became so cold. I am sorry that I am so resistant to your ideas. I am sorry that I am in such a hurry to do what I want. I am sorry that I make your feelings wrong. You do not deserve to be treated that way. I am sorry that I judged you.*

5. Love: *I love you and I want to work this out. I think I could listen to your feelings now. I want to support you. I understand I hurt your feelings. I am sorry I was so invalidating of your feelings. I really love you so much. I want to be your hero and I don't want to just agree with everything. I want you to admire me. I need to be me and I support you in being you. I love you. This time when we talk I will be more patient and understanding. You deserve that.*

I love you, Michael

P.S. The response I would like to hear: "I love you, Michael. I really appreciate what a caring and understanding man you are. I trust we can work this out."

A Love Letter About Frustration and Disappointment

Jean left a message for her husband, Bill, saying that she wanted him to bring some important mail home. Somehow, Bill never got the message. When he arrived home without the mail, Jean's reaction was strong frustration and disappointment.

Although Bill was not at fault, when Jean continued making comments about how much she needed that mail and how frustrated she was, he started to feel blamed and attacked. Jean did not realize that Bill was taking personally all her feelings of frustration and disappointment. Bill was about to

explode and make her wrong for being so upset.

Instead of dumping his defensive feelings on her and ruining their evening, he wisely decided to take ten minutes and write a Love Letter. When he finished writing, he came back more loving and gave his wife a hug, saying, "I am sorry you didn't get your mail. I wish I had gotten that message. Do you still love me anyway?" Jean responded with a lot of love and appreciation, and they had a wonderful evening instead of a cold war.

This is Bill's Love Letter:

Dear Jean,

1. Anger: *I hate when you get so upset. I hate when you blame me. I am angry that you are so unhappy. I am angry that you are not happy to see me. It feels like nothing I do is ever enough. I want you to appreciate me and be happy to see me.*

2. Sadness: *I am sad that you are so frustrated and disappointed. I am sad that you are not happy with me. I want you to be happy. I am sad that work is always getting in the way of our love life. I am sad that you don't appreciate all the wonderful things we have in our lives. I am sad I didn't come home with the mail you needed.*

3. Fear: *I am afraid I can't make you happy. I am afraid you will be unhappy all evening. I am afraid to be open with you or be close to you. I am afraid of needing your love. I am afraid I am not good enough. I am afraid you will hold this against me.*

4. Regret: *I am sorry that I didn't bring home the mail. I am sorry you are so unhappy. I am sorry that I didn't think to call you. I didn't want to upset you. I wanted you to be happy to see me. We have a four-day holiday and I want it to be special.*

5. Love: *I love you. I want you to be happy. I understand that you are upset. I understand that you need some time to just be upset. I know that you are not trying to make me feel bad. You just need a hug and some empathy. I am sorry. Sometimes I don't know what to do and I start making you be in the wrong. Thank you for being my wife. I love you so much. You don't have to be perfect and you don't have to be happy. I understand that you are upset about the mail.*

I love you, Bill

P.S. The response I would like to hear: "I love you, Bill. I appreciate how much you do for me. Thank you for being my husband."

STEP 2: WRITING A RESPONSE LETTER

Writing a Response Letter is the second step in the Love Letter Technique. Once you have expressed both your negative and positive feelings, taking an additional three to five minutes to write a Response Letter can be a healing process. In this letter, you will write the kind of response you would like to have from your partner.

It works like this. Imagine that your partner is able to respond lovingly to your hurt feelings—the ones you expressed in your Love Letter. Write a short letter to yourself pretending it is your partner writing to you. Include all the things you would like to hear from your partner about the hurts you have expressed. The following lead-in phrases can get you started:

- Thank you for …
- I understand …
- I am sorry …
- You deserve …
- I want …
- I love …

Sometimes writing a Response Letter is even more powerful than writing a Love Letter. Writing out what we actually want and need increases our openness to receiving the support we deserve. In addition, when we imagine our partners responding lovingly, we actually make it easier for them to do so.

Some people are very good at writing out their negative feelings but have a hard time finding the feelings of love. It is especially important for these people to write Response Letters and explore what they would want to hear in return. Be sure to feel your own resistance about letting your partner support you. This gives you an added awareness about how difficult it must be for your partner to deal lovingly with you at such times.

How We Can Learn About Our Partner's Needs

Sometimes women object to writing Response Letters. They expect their partners to know what to say. They have a hidden feeling that says "I don't want to tell him what I need; if he really loves me he will know." In this case a woman needs to remember men are from Mars and don't know what women need; they need to be told.

A man's response is more a reflection of his planet than a mirror of how much he loves her. If he were a Venusian, he would know what to say, but he is not. Men really don't know how to respond to a woman's feelings. For the most part, our culture doesn't teach men what women need.

If a man has seen and heard his father respond with loving words to his mother's upset feelings, then he would have a better idea about what to do. As it is, he doesn't know because he's never been taught. Response Letters are the best way to teach a man about a woman's needs. Slowly, but surely, he will learn.

Response Letters are the best way to teach a man about a woman's needs.

Sometimes women ask me "If I tell him what I want to hear, and he starts saying it, how do I know

he is not *just* saying it? I'm afraid he may not really mean it."

This is an important question. If a man doesn't love a woman he will not even bother to give her what she needs. If he even attempts to give a response similar to her request, then most likely he is really trying to respond.

If he doesn't sound fully sincere it's because he is learning something new. Learning a new way of responding is awkward. To him it may feel weak. This is a critical time. He needs lots of appreciation and encouragement. He needs feedback telling him he's on the right track.

If his attempts to support her seem somewhat insincere, it is usually because he is afraid his efforts will not work. If a woman appreciates his attempt, the next time he will feel more secure and thus be able to be more sincere. A man is not a fool. When he feels that a woman is receptive to him and that he can respond in a way that makes a positive difference, he will do it. It just takes time.

Women as well can learn a lot about men and what they need by hearing a man's Response Letter. A woman is generally perplexed by a man's reactions to her. She has no idea why he rejects her attempts to support him. She misunderstands what he needs. Sometimes she resists him because she thinks he wants her to give up herself. In most cases, however, he really wants her to trust, appreciate, and accept him.

To receive support we not only have to teach our partners what we need but we also have to be willing to be supported. Response Letters ensure that a person is open to being supported. Otherwise communication cannot work. To share hurt feelings with an attitude that says "Nothing you say can make me feel better" is not only counterproductive but also hurtful to your partner. It is better not to talk at these times.

Here is an example of a Love Letter and its Response Letter. Notice that the response is still under the P.S., but it's a bit longer and more detailed than those above.

A Love Letter and Response Letter About His Resistance

When Theresa asks her husband, Paul, for support, he resists her and appears burdened by her requests.

Dear Paul,

1. Anger: *I am angry that you resist me. I am angry that you do not offer to help me. I am angry that I always have to ask. I do so much for you. I need your help.*

2. Sadness: *I am sad that you don't want to help me. I am sad because I feel so alone. I want to do more things together. I miss your support.*

3. Fear: *I am afraid to ask for your help. I am afraid of your anger. I am afraid you will say no and then I will be hurt.*

4. Regret: *I am sorry that I resent you so much. I am sorry that I nag you and criticize you. I am sorry I don't appreciate you more. I am sorry I give too much and then demand you do the same.*

5. Love: *I love you. I understand you are doing your best. I know you do care about me. I want to ask you in more loving ways. You are such a loving father to our children.*

I love you, Theresa

P.S. The response I would like to hear is:

Dear Theresa,

Thank you for loving me so much. Thank you for sharing your feelings. I understand that it hurts you when I act as if your requests are too demanding. I understand that it hurts when I resist you. I am sorry that I don't offer to help you more often. You deserve my support and I want to support you more. I do love you and I feel so happy that you are my wife.

I love you, Paul

STEP 3: SHARING YOUR LOVE LETTER AND RESPONSE LETTER

Sharing your letters is important for the following reasons:

- It gives your partner an opportunity to support you.
- It allows you to get the understanding you need.
- It gives your partner necessary feedback in a loving and respectful way.
- It motivates change in a relationship.
- It creates intimacy and passion.
- It teaches your partner what is important to you and how successfully to support you.
- It helps couples to start talking again when communication breaks down.
- It teaches us how to hear negative feelings in a safe way.

There are five ways to share your letters outlined below. In this case, it is assumed that *she* wrote the letter, but these methods work just as well if *he* wrote the letter.

1. *He* reads her Love Letter and Response Letter out loud while she is present. Then he holds her hands and gives his own loving response with a greater awareness of what she needs to hear.

2. *She* reads her Love Letter and Response Letter out loud while he is listening. Then he holds her hands and gives his own loving response with a greater awareness of what she needs to hear.

3. *First he reads her Response Letter out loud to her.* Then he reads her Love Letter out loud. It is much easier for a man to hear negative feelings when he already knows how to respond to those feelings. By letting a man know what is required of him, he doesn't panic as much when he is hearing negative feelings. After he reads her Love Letter he then holds her hands and gives his own loving response with a greater awareness of what she needs to hear.

4. *First she reads her Response Letter to him.* Then she reads her Love Letter out loud. Finally he holds her hands and gives her a loving response with a greater awareness of what she needs.

5. *She gives her letters to him and he reads them privately within twenty-four hours.* After he has read the letters, he thanks her for writing them and holds her hands and gives her a loving response with a greater awareness of what she needs.

What to Do If Your Partner Can't Respond Lovingly

Based on their past experiences some men and women have great difficulty hearing Love Letters. In this case they should not be expected to read one. But even when your partner chooses to hear a letter, sometimes they are unable to respond right away in a loving manner. Let's take Paul and Theresa as an example.

If Paul is not feeling more loving after he has heard his partner's letters, then it is because he can't respond with love at that time. But after time his feelings will change.

When reading the letters, he may feel attacked by the anger and hurt and become defensive. At such times he needs to take a time-out to reflect on what was said.

Sometimes when a person hears a Love Letter they only hear the anger and it will take a while before they can hear the love. It helps if, after a bit, he rereads the letter, especially the regret and love sections. Sometimes before I read a Love Letter from my wife, I read the love section first and then I read the full letter.

If a man is upset after reading a Love Letter, he could also respond with his own Love Letter, which would allow him to process the negative feelings that came up when he read her Love Letter. Sometimes I don't know what is bothering me until my wife shares a Love Letter with me, and then suddenly I have something to write about. By writing my letter I am able to find again my loving feelings and reread her letter and hear the love behind her hurt.

If a man cannot immediately respond with love, he needs to know that it's OK and not be punished. His partner needs to understand and accept his need to think about things for a while. Perhaps, to support his partner, he can say something like "Thank you for writing this letter. I need some time to think about it and then we can talk about it." It is important that he not express critical feelings about the letter. Sharing letters needs to be a safe time.

All of the above suggestions for sharing Love Letters also apply when a woman has difficulty responding to a man's letter in a loving way. I generally recommend that couples read out loud the letters they have written. It is helpful to read your partner's letter out loud because it helps them feel heard. Experiment with both, and see what fits you.

MAKING IT SAFE FOR LOVE LETTERS

Sharing Love Letters can be scary. The person writing their true feelings will feel vulnerable. If their partner rejects them it can be very painful. The purpose of sharing the letter is to open up feelings so that partners can become closer. It works well as long as the process is done in safety. The person receiving the Love Letter needs to be particularly respectful of the writer's expression. If they cannot give true, respectful support, then they shouldn't agree to listen until they can.

Sharing letters needs to be done with the correct intention. Sharing a letter needs to be done in the spirit of the following two statements of intent.

Statement of Intent for Writing and Sharing a Love Letter

I have written this letter in order to find my positive feelings and to give you the love you deserve. As part of that process I am sharing with you my negative feelings, which are holding me back.

Your understanding will help me to open up and let go of my negative feelings. I trust that you do care and that you will respond to my feelings in the best way you can. I appreciate your willingness to listen and support me.

In addition I hope that this letter will assist you in understanding my wants, needs, and wishes.

The partner who is hearing the letter needs to listen in the spirit of the following statement of intent.

Statement of Intent for Hearing a Love Letter

I promise to do my best to understand the validity of your feelings, to accept our differences, to respect your needs as I do my own, and to appreciate that you are doing your best to communicate your feelings and love.

I promise to listen and not correct or deny your feelings. I promise to accept you and not try to change you.

I am willing to listen to your feelings because I do care and I trust that we can work this out.

The first few times you practice the Love Letter Technique it will be much safer if you actually read these statements out loud. These statements of intent will help you remember to respect your partner's feelings and respond in a loving, safe way.

MINI LOVE LETTERS

If you are upset and you don't have twenty minutes to write a Love Letter, you can try writing a mini Love Letter. It only takes three to five minutes and can really help. Here are some examples:

Dear Max,

1. I am so angry that you are late!

2. I am sad that you have forgotten me.

3. I am afraid you don't really care about me.

4. I am sorry that I am so unforgiving.

5. I love you and I forgive you for being late. I know you really love me. Thank you for trying.

Love, Sandie

Dear Henry,

1. I am angry that you are so tired. I am angry that you just watch TV.

2. I am sad that you don't want to talk to me.

3. I am afraid that we are growing apart. I am afraid of making you angry.

4. I am sorry that I rejected you at dinner. I am sorry I blame you for our problems.

5. I miss your love. Would you schedule an hour with me tonight or sometime soon just for me to share with you what's going on in my life?

Love, Lesley

P.S. What I would like to hear from you is:

Dear Lesley,

Thank you for writing me about your feelings. I understand that you miss me. Let's schedule special time tonight between eight and nine.

Love, Henry

WHEN TO WRITE LOVE LETTERS

The time to write a Love Letter is whenever you are upset and you want to feel better. Here are some common ways Love Letters can be written.

1. Love Letter to an intimate partner.
2. Love Letter to a friend, child, or family member.
3. Love Letter to a business associate or client. Instead of saying "I love you" at the end you may choose to use "I appreciate" and "I respect." In most cases I don't recommend sharing it.
4. Love Letter to yourself.
5. Love Letter to God or Higher Power. Share your upset feelings about your life with God and ask for support.
6. Role reversal Love Letter. If it is hard to forgive someone, pretend that you are them for a few minutes and write a Love Letter from them to you. You will be amazed at how quickly you become more forgiving.
7. Monster Love Letter. If you are really upset and your feelings are mean and judgmental, vent them in a letter. Then burn the letter. Do not expect your partner to read it unless you both can handle negative feelings and are willing to do so. In that case even monster letters can be very helpful.
8. Displacement Love Letter. When present events upset you and remind you of unresolved feelings from childhood, imagine you can go back in time and write a letter to one of your parents, sharing your feelings and asking for their support.

WHY WE NEED TO WRITE LOVE LETTERS

As we have explored throughout this book, it is vastly important for women to share their feelings and feel cared for, understood, and respected. It is equally important for men to feel appreciated, accepted, and trusted. The biggest problem in relationships occurs when a woman shares her upset feelings and, as a result, a man feels unloved.

To him, her negative feelings may sound critical, blaming, demanding, and resentful. When he rejects her feelings, she then feels unloved. The success of a relationship is solely dependent on two factors: a man's ability to listen lovingly and respectfully to a woman's feelings, and a woman's ability to share her feelings in a loving and respectful way.

A relationship requires that partners communicate their changing feelings and needs. To expect perfect communication is certainly too idealistic. Fortunately, between here and perfection there is a lot of room for growth.

Realistic Expectations

To expect communication always to be easy is unrealistic. Some feelings are very difficult to communicate without hurting the listener. Couples who have wonderful and loving relationships will sometimes agonize over how to communicate in a way that works for both people. It is difficult truly to understand another person's point of view, especially when he or she is not saying what you want to hear. It is also hard to be respectful of another when your own feelings have been hurt.

Many couples mistakenly think that their inability to communicate successfully and lovingly means they don't love each other enough. Certainly love has a lot to do with it, but communication *skill* is a much more important ingredient. Fortunately, it's a learnable skill.

How We Learn to Communicate

Successful communication would be second nature if we grew up in families that were already capable of honest and loving communication. But in previous generations, so-called loving communication generally meant avoiding negative feelings. It was often as if negative feelings were a shameful sickness and something to be locked away in the closet.

In less "civilized" families what was considered loving communication might include acting out or rationalizing negative feelings through physical punishment, yelling, spanking, whipping, and all kinds of verbal abuse—all in the name of trying to help the children learn right from wrong.

Had our parents learned to communicate lovingly, without suppressing negative feelings, we as children would have been safe to discover and explore our own negative reactions and feelings through trial and error. Through positive role models we would have learned successfully how to communicate—especially our difficult feelings. As a result of eighteen years of trial and error in expressing our feelings, we would have gradually learned to express our feelings respectfully and appropriately. If this had been the case, we would not need the Love Letter Technique.

If Our Past Were Different

Had our past been different, we would have watched our father successfully and lovingly listen to our mother expand and express her frustrations and disappointments. Daily we would have experienced our father giving our mother the loving caring and understanding that she needed from her loving husband.

We would have watched our mother trusting our father and sharing her feelings openly, without

disapproving or blaming him. We would have experienced how a person could be upset without pushing someone away with mistrust, emotional manipulation, avoidance, disapproval, condescension, or coldness.

Throughout our eighteen years of growing up we would gradually be able to master our own emotions just as we have mastered walking or math. It would be a learned skill, like walking, jumping, singing, reading, and balancing a checkbook.

But it didn't happen that way for most of us. Instead we spent eighteen years learning unsuccessful communication skills. Because we lack education in how to communicate feelings, it is a difficult and seemingly insurmountable task to communicate lovingly when we are having negative feelings.

To come to understand how difficult this is, consider your answers to these following questions:

1. When you are feeling angry or resentful, how do you express love if, while you were growing up, your parents either argued or conspired to avoid arguing?
2. How do you get your kids to listen to you without yelling or punishing them if your parents yelled and punished you to maintain control?
3. How do you ask for more support if, even as a child, you felt repeatedly neglected and disappointed?
4. How do you open up and share your feelings if you are afraid of being rejected?
5. How do you talk to your partner if your feelings say "I hate you"?
6. How do you say "I am sorry" if, as a child, you were punished for making mistakes?
7. How can you admit your mistakes if you are afraid of punishment and rejection?
8. How can you show your feelings if, as a child, you were repeatedly rejected or judged for being upset and crying?
9. How are you supposed to ask for what you want if, as a child, you were repeatedly made to feel wrong for wanting more?
10. How are you even supposed to know what you are feeling if your parents didn't have the time, patience, or awareness to ask you how you were feeling or what was bothering you?
11. How can you accept your partner's imperfections if, as a child, you felt you had to be perfect to be worthy of love?
12. How can you listen to your partner's painful feelings if no one listened to yours?
13. How can you forgive if you were not forgiven?
14. How are you supposed to cry and heal your pain and grief if, as a child, you were repeatedly told "Don't cry" or "When are you going to grow up?" or "Only babies cry"?
15. How can you hear your partner's disappointment if, as a child, you were made to feel responsible for your mother's pain long before you could understand that you were *not* responsible?
16. How can you hear your partner's anger if, as a child, your mother or father took their frustrations out on you through yelling and being demanding?
17. How do you open up and trust your partner if the first people you trusted with your innocence betrayed you in some way?
18. How are you supposed to communicate your feelings lovingly and respectfully if you haven't had eighteen years of practice without the threat of being rejected and abandoned?

The answer to all these eighteen questions is the same: it is possible to learn loving

communication, but we need to work at it. We have to make up for the eighteen years of neglect. No matter how perfect our parents were, nobody is really perfect. If you have problems communicating, it is neither a curse nor all your partner's fault. It is simply a lack of having the correct training and the safety to practice.

In reading the above questions, you may have had some feelings come up. Don't waste this special opportunity to heal yourself. Take twenty minutes right now and write one of your parents a Love Letter. Simply get a pen and some paper and begin expressing your feelings, using the Love Letter format. Try it now, and you will be amazed at the outcome.

TELLING THE COMPLETE TRUTH

Love Letters work because they assist you in telling the complete truth. Merely to explore a part of your feelings does not bring about the desired healing. For example:

1. Feeling your anger may not help you at all. It may just make you more angry. The more you dwell on just your anger, the more upset you will become.
2. Crying for hours may leave you feeling empty and spent, if you never move past the sadness.
3. To feel only your fears may make you even more fearful.
4. To feel sorry, without moving through it, may just make you feel guilty and ashamed and may even be harmful to your self-esteem.
5. Trying to feel loving all the time will force you to suppress all your negative emotions, and after a few years, you will become numb and unfeeling.

Love Letters work because they guide you in writing out the complete truth about *all* your feelings. To heal our inner pain, we must feel each of the four primary aspects of emotional pain. They are anger, sadness, fear, and regret.

Why Love Letters Work

By expressing each of the four levels of emotional pain, our pain is released. Writing only one or two negative feelings does not work as well. This is because many of our negative emotional reactions are not real feelings but defense mechanisms we unconsciously use to avoid our true feelings. For example:

1. People who get angry easily generally are trying to hide from their hurt, sadness, fear, or regret. When they feel their more vulnerable feelings, the anger goes away and they become more loving.
2. People who cry easily generally have a hard time getting angry, but when they are helped to express anger they feel much better and more loving.

3. People who are fearful generally need to feel and express their anger; the fear then goes away.

4. People who often feel sorry and guilty generally need to feel and express their hurt and anger before they can feel the self-love they deserve.

5. People who always feel loving but wonder why they are depressed or numb generally need to ask themselves this question: "If I were angry and upset about something, what would it be?" and write out the answers. This will help them get in touch with the feelings hidden behind the depression and numbness. Love Letters can be used in this fashion.

How Feelings Can Hide Other Feelings

Following are some examples of how men and women use their negative emotions to avoid or suppress their true pain. Keep in mind that this process is automatic. We are often not aware that it is happening.

Consider for a moment these questions:

- Do you ever smile when you are really angry?
- Have you acted angry when deep inside you were afraid?
- Do you laugh and make jokes when you are really sad and hurt?
- Have you been quick to blame others when you felt guilty or afraid?

The following chart shows how men and women commonly deny their true feelings. Certainly not all men will fit the male description just as not all women will fit the female description. The chart gives us a way to understand how we may remain strangers to our real feelings.

Ways We Cover Up Our Real Feelings

How men hide their pain (This process is generally unconscious):
1. Men may use anger as a way of avoiding the painful feelings of sadness, hurt, sorrow, guilt, and fear.

How women hide their pain (This process is generally unconscious):
1. Women may use concern and worry as a way of avoiding the painful feelings of anger, guilt, fear, and disappointment.

How men hide their pain (This process is generally unconscious):
2. Men may use indifference and discouragement as a way of avoiding the painful feelings of anger.

How women hide their pain (This process is generally unconscious):
2. Women may fall into confusion as a way of avoiding anger, irritation, and frustration.

How men hide their pain (This process is generally unconscious):

3. Men may use feeling offended as a way of avoiding feeling hurt.

How women hide their pain (This process is generally unconscious):
3. Women may use feeling bad as a way of avoiding embarrassment, anger, sadness, and regret.

How men hide their pain (This process is generally unconscious):
4. Men may use anger and righteousness as a way to avoid feeling afraid or uncertain.

How women hide their pain (This process is generally unconscious):
4. Women may use fear and uncertainty as a way of avoiding anger, hurt, and sadness.

How men hide their pain (This process is generally unconscious):
5. Men may feel ashamed to avoid anger and grieving.

How women hide their pain (This process is generally unconscious):
5. Women may use grieving to avoid feeling angry and afraid.

How men hide their pain (This process is generally unconscious):
6. Men may use peace and calm as a way to avoid anger, fear, disappointment, discouragement, and shame.

How women hide their pain (This process is generally unconscious):
6. Women may use hope as a way to avoid anger, sadness, grief, and sorrow.

How men hide their pain (This process is generally unconscious):
7. Men may use confidence to avoid feeling inadequate

How women hide their pain (This process is generally unconscious):
7. Women may use happiness and gratitude to avoid feeling sadness and disappointment.

How men hide their pain (This process is generally unconscious):
8. Men may use aggression to avoid feeling afraid.

How women hide their pain (This process is generally unconscious):
8. Women may use love and forgiveness as a way to avoid feeling hurt and angry.

HEALING NEGATIVE FEELINGS

Understanding and accepting another's negative feelings are difficult if your own negative feelings have not been heard and supported. The more we are able to heal our own unresolved feelings from childhood the easier it is responsibly to share our feelings and to listen to our partner's feelings without being hurt, impatient, frustrated, or offended.

The more resistance you have to feeling your inner pain, the more resistance you will have to listening to the feelings of others. If you feel impatient and intolerant when others express their childlike feelings, then this is an indicator of how you treat yourself.

To retrain ourselves we must reparent ourselves. We must acknowledge that there is an emotional

person inside us who gets upset even when our rational adult mind says there is no reason to be upset. We must isolate that emotional part of our self and become a loving parent to it. We need to ask ourselves "What's the matter? Are you hurt? What are you feeling? What happened to upset you? What are you angry about? What makes you sad? What are you afraid of? What do you want?"

When we listen to our feelings with compassion, our negative feelings quite miraculously are healed, and we are able to respond to situations in a much more loving and respectful way. By understanding our childlike feelings we automatically open a door for loving feelings to permeate what we say.

If as children our inner emotions had been repeatedly heard and validated in a loving way, then as adults we wouldn't get stuck in negative emotions. But most of us weren't supported this way as children, so we have to do it for ourselves.

How Your Past Affects You Today

Certainly you've had the experience of feeling gripped by negative emotions. These are some common ways our unresolved emotions from childhood may affect us today as we encounter the stresses of being adults:

1. When something has been frustrating, we remain stuck feeling angry and annoyed, even when our adult self says we should feel calm, loving, and peaceful.

2. When something has been disappointing, we remain stuck feeling sad and hurt, even when our adult self says we should feel enthusiastic, happy, and hopeful.

3. When something has been upsetting, we remain stuck feeling afraid and worried, even when our adult self says we should feel assured, confident, and grateful.

4. When something has been embarrassing, we remain stuck feeling sorry and ashamed, even when our adult self says we should feel secure, good, and wonderful.

Silencing Your Feelings Through Addictions

As adults we generally try to control these negative emotions by avoiding them. Our addictions can be used to silence the painful cries of our feelings and unfulfilled needs. After a glass of wine, the pain is gone for a moment. But it will come back again and again.

Ironically, the very act of avoiding our negative emotions gives them the power to control our lives. By learning to listen to and nurture our inner emotions, they gradually lose their grip.

Ironically, the very act of avoiding our negative emotions gives them the power to control our lives.

When you are very upset, it certainly is not possible to communicate as effectively as you want to. At such times the unresolved feelings of your past have come back. It is as though the child that was never allowed to throw a tantrum now throws one, only to be exiled once again into the closet.

Our unresolved childhood emotions have the power to control us by gripping our adult awareness and preventing loving communication. Until we are able lovingly to listen to these seemingly irrational feelings from our past (which seem to intrude into our life when we most need our sanity), they will obstruct loving communication.

The secret of communicating our difficult feelings lies in having the wisdom and the commitment to express our negative feelings in writing so that we can become aware of our more positive feelings. The more we are able to communicate to our partners with the love they deserve, the better our relationships will be. When you are able to share your upset feelings in a loving way, it becomes much easier for your partner to support you in return.

SECRETS OF SELF-HELP

Writing Love Letters is an excellent self-help tool, but if you don't immediately get in the habit of writing them you may forget to use it. I suggest that at least once a week when something is bothering you, sit down and write a Love Letter.

Love Letters are helpful not only when you feel upset with your partner in a relationship but also whenever you are upset. Writing Love Letters helps when you are feeling resentful, unhappy, anxious, depressed, annoyed, tired, stuck, or simply stressed. Whenever you want to feel better, write a Love Letter. It may not always completely improve your mood, but it will help move you in the direction you want to go.

In my first book, *What You Feel You Can Heal* , the importance of exploring feelings and writing Love Letters is more fully discussed. In addition, in my tape series, *Healing the Heart*, I share healing visualizations and exercises based on the Love Letter Technique for overcoming anxiety, releasing resentment, and finding forgiveness, loving your inner child, and healing past emotional wounds.

In addition, many more books and workbooks have been written on this subject by other authors. Reading these books is important to help you get in touch with your inner feelings and heal them. But remember, unless you are letting that emotional part of you speak out and be heard, it cannot be healed. Books can inspire you to love yourself more, but by listening to, writing out, or verbally expressing your feelings you are actually doing it.

Books can inspire you to love yourself more, but by listening to, writing out, or verbally expressing your feelings you are actually doing it.

As you practice the Love Letter Technique you will begin to experience the part of you that needs love the most. By listening to your feelings and exploring your emotions, you will be helping this part of you to grow and develop.

As your emotional self gets the love and understanding it needs, you will automatically begin to communicate better. You will become capable of responding to situations in a more loving manner. Even though we have all been programmed to hide our feelings and react defensively and not lovingly, we can retrain ourselves. There is great hope.

To retrain yourself you need to listen to and understand the unresolved feelings that have never had a chance to be healed. This part of you needs to be felt, heard, and understood and then it is healed.

Practicing the Love Letter Technique is a safe way to express unresolved feelings, negative emotions, and wants without being judged or rejected. By listening to our feelings we are in effect wisely treating our emotional side like a little child crying in a loving parent's arms. By exploring the complete truth of our feelings we are giving ourselves full permission to have these feelings. Through treating this childlike part of us with respect and love, the unresolved emotional wounds of our past can be gradually healed.

Many people grow up too quickly because they reject and suppress their feelings. Their unresolved emotional pain is waiting inside to come out to be loved and healed. Although they may attempt to suppress these feelings, the pain and unhappiness continue to affect them.

Most physical diseases are now widely accepted as being directly related to our unresolved emotional pain. Suppressed emotional pain generally becomes physical pain or sickness and can cause premature death. In addition, *most* of our destructive compulsions, obsessions, and addictions are expressions of our inner emotional wounds.

A man's common obsession with success is his desperate attempt to win love in hopes of reducing his inner emotional pain and turmoil. A woman's common obsession with being perfect is her desperate attempt to be worthy of love and reduce her emotional pain. Anything done to excess can become a means to numb the pain of our unresolved past.

Our society is filled with distractions to assist us in avoiding our pain. Love Letters, however, assist you in looking at your pain, feeling it and then healing it. Every time you write a Love Letter you are giving your inner emotional and wounded self the love, understanding, and attention it needs to feel better.

The Power of Privacy

Sometimes, by privately writing out your feelings, you will discover deeper levels of feelings that you could not feel with another person present. Complete privacy creates the safety to feel more deeply. Even if you are in a relationship and you feel you can talk about anything, I still recommend privately writing down your feelings sometimes. Writing Love Letters in private is also healthy because it provides a time for you to give to yourself without depending on anyone else.

I recommend keeping a journal of your Love Letters or keeping them together in a file. To make writing Love Letters easier, you may wish to refer to the sample Love Letter format given earlier in this chapter. This Love Letter format can assist you in remembering the different stages of a Love Letter and offer some lead-in phrases when you may be stuck.

If you have a personal computer then type in the Love Letter format and use it over and over again. Simply open to that file whenever you want to write a Love Letter, and when you are finished save it by the date. Print it out if you wish to share it with someone.

In addition to writing letters, I suggest that you keep a private file for your letters. Occasionally reread these letters when you are not upset because that is when you can review your feelings with a greater objectivity. This objectivity will help you to express upset feelings at a later time in a more respectful way. Also if you write a Love Letter and you are still upset, by rereading the letter you may begin to feel better.

The Power of Intimacy

Privately writing Love Letters is very healing in itself, but it does not replace our need to be heard and understood by others. When you write a Love Letter you are loving yourself, but when you share a letter you are receiving love. To grow in our ability to love ourselves we need to receive love as well. Sharing the truth opens the door of intimacy through which love can enter.

To grow in our ability to love ourselves we need to receive love as well.

To receive more love we need to have people in our life with whom we can openly and safely share our feelings. It is very powerful to have some select people in your life with whom you can share your every feeling and trust that they will still love you and not hurt you with criticism, judgment, or rejection.

When you can share who you are and how you feel, then you can fully receive love. If you have this love, it is easier to release negative emotional symptoms like resentment, anger, fear, and so forth. This does not mean that you need to share everything you feel and discover in private. But if there are feelings that you are afraid to share, then gradually these fears need to be healed.

A loving therapist or close friend can be a tremendous source of love and healing if you can share your inner and deepest feelings. If you don't have a therapist, then having a friend read your letters from time to time is very helpful. Writing in private will make you feel better, but occasionally sharing your Love Letters with another person who cares and can be understanding is essential.

The Power of the Group

The power of group support is something that cannot be described but has to be experienced. A loving and supportive group can do wonders to help us more easily get in touch with our deeper feelings. To share your feelings with a group means there are more people available to give you love. The potential for growth is magnified by the size of the group. Even if you do not speak out in a group, by listening to others speak openly and honestly about their feelings, your awareness and insight expand.

When I lead group seminars around the country I repeatedly experience deeper parts of myself that need to be heard and understood. When someone stands up and shares their feelings, suddenly I begin to remember something or feel something myself. I gain valuable new insights about myself and others. At the end of each seminar I generally feel much lighter and more loving.

Everywhere small support groups on almost every topic meet each week to give and receive this support. Group support is especially helpful if as children we did not feel safe to express ourselves in groups or in our family. While any positive group activity is empowering, speaking or listening in a loving and supportive group can be personally healing.

I meet regularly with a small men's support group, and my wife, Bonnie, meets regularly with her women's support group. Getting this outside support greatly enhances our relationship. It frees us from looking to each other as the sole source of support. In addition, by listening to others share their successes and failures our own problems tend to shrink.

Taking Time to Listen

Whether you are privately writing down your thoughts and feelings on your computer or sharing them in therapy, in your relationships, or in a support group, you are taking an important step for yourself. When you take the time to listen to your feelings you are in effect saying to the little feeling person inside "You matter. You deserve to be heard and I care enough to listen."

When you take the time to listen to your feelings you are in effect saying to the little feeling person inside "You matter. You deserve to be heard and I care enough to listen."

I hope you will use this Love Letter Technique because I have witnessed it transform the lives of thousands of people, including my own. As you write more Love Letters it becomes easier and works better. It takes practice, but it is worth it.

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How to Ask for Support and Get It

If you are not getting the support you want in your relationships a significant reason may be that you do not ask enough or you may ask in a way that doesn't work. Asking for love and support is essential to the success of any relationship. If you want to G-E-T then you have to A-S-K.

Both men and women have difficulty asking for support. Women, however, tend to find it much more frustrating and disappointing to ask for support than men do. For this reason, I will be addressing this chapter to women. Of course, men will deepen their understanding of women if they too read this chapter.

WHY WOMEN DON'T ASK

Women make the mistake of thinking they dont have to ask for support. Because *they* intuitively feel the needs of others and give whatever they can, they mistakenly expect men to do the same. When a woman is in love, she instinctively offers her love. With great delight and enthusiasm, she looks for ways to offer her support. The more she loves someone, the more motivated she is to offer her love. Back on Venus, everyone automatically gives support, so there was no reason to ask for it. In fact, not needing to ask is one of the ways they show their love for one another. On Venus their motto is "Love is never having to ask!"

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Because this is her reference point, she assumes that if her partner loves her, he will offer his support and she won't have to ask. She may even purposefully *not ask* as a test to see if he really loves her. To pass the test, she requires that he anticipate her needs and offer his unsolicited support!

This approach to relationships with men doesn't work. Men are from Mars, and on Mars if you want support you simply have to ask for it. Men are not instinctively motivated to *offer* their support; they need to be asked. This can be very confusing because if you ask a man for support in the wrong way he gets turned off, and if you don't ask at all you'll get little or none.

In the beginning of a relationship, if a woman doesn't get the support she wants, she then assumes that he is not giving because he has nothing more to give. She patiently and lovingly continues to give, assuming that sooner or later he'll catch up. He assumes, however, he is giving enough, because she continues giving to him.

He doesn't realize she is expecting him to give back. He thinks that if she needed or wanted more she would stop giving. But since she is from Venus, she not only wants more but also expects him to *offer* his support without being asked. But he is waiting for her to start asking for support if she wants it. If she is not asking for support he assumes he is giving enough.

Eventually, she may ask for his support, but by this time she has given so much more and feels so much resentment that her request is really a demand. Some women will resent a man simply because they have to ask for his support. Then, when they do ask, even if he says yes and gives her some support, she will still resent that she had to ask. She feels "If I have to ask, it doesn't count."

Men do not respond well to demands and resentment. Even if a man is willing to give support, her resentment or demands will lead him to say no. Demands are a complete turnoff. Her chances of getting his support are dramatically reduced when a request becomes a demand. In some cases he will even give less for a while if he senses that she is demanding more.

If a woman is not asking for support a man assumes he is giving enough.

This pattern makes relationships with men very difficult for the unaware women. Though this problem may feel insurmountable, it can be solved. By remembering that men are from Mars you can learn new ways to ask for what you want—ways that work.

In my seminars I have trained thousands of women in the art of asking, and they repeatedly have had immediate success. In this chapter we will explore the three steps involved in asking for and getting what you want. They are:

(1) Practice asking correctly for what you're already getting;

(2) Practice asking for more, even when you know he will say no, and accept his no; (3) Practice assertive asking.

STEP 1: ASKING CORRECTLY FOR WHAT YOU ARE ALREADY GETTING

The first step in learning how to get more in your relationships is to practice asking for what you are already getting. Become aware of what your partner is already doing for you. Especially the little things, like carrying boxes, fixing things, cleaning up, making calls, and other little chores.

The important part of this stage is to begin asking him to do the little things he already does and not to take him for granted. Then when he does those things give him a lot of appreciation. Temporarily give up expecting him to offer his support unsolicited.

In step 1, it is important not to ask for more than what he is used to giving. Focus on asking him to do little things that he normally does. Allow him to become used to hearing you ask for things in a nondemanding tone.

When he hears a demanding tone, no matter how nicely you phrase your request, all he hears is that he is not giving enough. This makes him feel unloved and unappreciated. His tendency is then to give

less until you appreciate what he is already giving.

When a man hears a demanding tone, no matter how nicely you phrase your request, all he hears is that he is not giving enough. His tendency is then to give less until you appreciate what he is already giving.

He may be conditioned by you (or his mother) immediately to say no to your requests. In step 1 you will be reconditioning him to respond positively to your requests. When a man gradually realizes that he is appreciated and not taken for granted and that he pleases you, he will want to respond positively to your requests when he can. Then he will begin automatically offering his support. But this advanced stage shouldn't be expected in the beginning.

But there's another reason to start by asking him for what he's already giving. You need to be sure you're asking in a way he can hear you and respond. That's what I mean when I say "asking correctly."

Tips for Motivating a Man

There are five secrets of how to correctly ask a Martian for support. If they are not observed, he may be easily turned off. They are: appropriate timing, nondemanding attitude, be brief, be direct, and use correct wording. Let's look at each more closely:

1. ***Appropriate Timing.*** Be careful not to ask him to do something that he is obviously just planning to do. For example, if he is about to empty the trash, don't say "Could you empty the trash?" He will feel you are telling him what to do. Timing is crucial. Also if he is fully focused on something don't expect him immediately to respond to your request.

2. ***Nondemanding Attitude.*** Remember, a request is not a demand. If you have a resentful or demanding attitude, no matter how carefully you choose your words, he will feel unappreciated for what he has already given and probably say no.

3. ***Be Brief.*** Avoid giving him a list of reasons why he should help you. Assume that he doesn't have to be convinced. The longer you explain yourself the more he will resist. Long explanations validating your request make him feel as though you don't trust him to support you. He will start to feel manipulated instead of free to offer his support.

When asking a man for support, assume that

he doesn't have to be convinced.

Just as a woman who is upset doesn't want to hear a list of reasons and explanations about why she shouldn't be upset, a man doesn't want to hear a list of reasons and explanations about why he should fulfill her request.

Women mistakenly give a list of reasons to justify their needs. They think it will help him see that her request is valid and therefore motivate him. What a man hears is "This is why you have to do it." The longer the list, the more he may resist supporting you. If he asks you "why?" then you can give your reasons, but then again, be cautiously brief. Practice trusting that he will do it, if he can. Be as brief as possible.

4. Be Direct. Women often think they are asking for support when they are not. When she needs support, a woman may present the problem but not directly ask for his support. She expects him to offer his support and neglects directly to ask for it.

An indirect request implies the request but does not directly say it. These indirect requests make a man feel taken for granted and unappreciated. Occasionally using indirect statements is certainly OK, but when they are repeatedly used, a man becomes resistant to giving his support. He may not even know why he is so resistant. The following statements are all examples of indirect requests and how a man might respond to them.

What He May Hear When She Is Nondirect

What she should say (brief and direct): "Would you pick up the kids?"

What she should not say (indirect): "The kids need to be picked up and I can't do it."

What he hears when she is indirect: "If you can pick them up you should, otherwise I will feel very unsupported and resent you" (demand).

What she should say (brief and direct): "Would you bring in the groceries?"

What she should not say (indirect): "The groceries are in the car."

What he hears when she is indirect: "It's your job to bring them in, I went shopping" (expectation).

What she should say (brief and direct): "Would you empty the trash?"

What she should not say (indirect): "I can't fit anything else in the trash can."

What he hears when she is indirect: "You haven't emptied the trash. You shouldn't wait so long" (criticism).

What she should say (brief and direct): "Would you clean up the backyard?"

What she should not say (indirect): "The backyard is really a mess."

What he hears when she is indirect: "You didn't clean up the yard again. You should be more responsible, I shouldn't have to remind you" (rejection).

What she should say (brief and direct): "Would you bring in the mail?"

What she should not say (indirect): "The mail hasn't been brought in."

What he hears when she is indirect: "You forgot to bring in the mail. You should remember" (disapproval).

What she should say (brief and direct): "Would you take us out to eat tonight?"

What she should not say (indirect): "I have no time to make dinner tonight."

What he hears when she is indirect: "I have done so much, the least you could do is take us out tonight" (dissatisfaction).

What she should say (brief and direct): "Would you take me out this week?"

What she should not say (indirect): "We haven't gone out in weeks."

What he hears when she is indirect: "You are neglecting me. I'm not getting what I need. You should take me out more often" (resentment).

What she should say (brief and direct): "Would you schedule some time to talk with me?"

What she should not say (indirect): "We need to talk."

What he hears when she is indirect: "It is your fault we don't talk enough. You should talk with me more" (blame).

5. Use Correct Wording. One of the most common mistakes in asking for support is the use of *could* and *can* in place of *would* and *will*. *"Could* you empty the trash?" is merely a question gathering information. *"Would* you empty the trash?" is a request.

Women often use "could you?" indirectly to imply "would you?" As I mentioned before, indirect requests are a turnoff. When used occasionally they certainly may go unnoticed, but persistently using *can* and *could* begins to irritate men.

When I suggest to women that they begin asking for support, sometimes they panic because their partners have already made comments many times such as:

- "Don't nag me."
- "Don't ask me to do things all the time."
- "Stop telling me what to do."
- "I already know what to do."
- "You don't have to tell me that."

In spite of how it sounds to a woman, when a man makes this kind of comment, what he really means is "I don't like the way you ask!" If a woman doesn't understand how certain language can affect men, she will get even more snarled. She becomes afraid to ask and starts saying "Could you …" because she thinks she is being more polite. Though this works well on Venus, it doesn't work at all on Mars.

On Mars it would be an insult to ask a man *"Can* you empty the trash?" Of course he can empty the trash! The question is not *can* he empty the trash but *will* he empty the trash. After he has been insulted, he may say no just because you have irritated him.

What Men Want to Be Asked

When I explain this distinction between the *c* words and the *w* words in my seminars, women tend to think I am making a big deal over nothing. To women there is not much difference—in fact, "could you?" may even seem more polite than "would you?" But to many men it is a big difference. Because this distinction is so important, I'm including comments by seventeen different men who attended my seminars.

1. When I am asked "Could you clean up the backyard" I really take it literally. I say, "I could do it, sure it's possible." But I am not saying "I will do it," and I certainly don't feel like I am making a promise to do it. On the other hand, when I am asked "Would you clean up the backyard" I begin to make a decision, and I am willing to be supportive. If I say yes, the chances

of my remembering to do it are much greater because I have made a promise.

2. When she says "I need your help. *Could* you please help?" it sounds critical, like somehow I have already failed her. It doesn't feel like an invitation to be the good guy I want to be and support her. On the other hand, "I need your help. *Would* you please carry this?" sounds like a request and an opportunity to be the good guy. I want to say yes.

3. When my wife says *"Can* you change Christopher's diaper?" I think inside, Sure I can change it. I am capable, and a diaper is a simple thing to change. But then if I don't feel like doing it I might make some excuse. Now, if she asked *"Would* you change Christopher's diaper?" I would say "Yeah, sure," and do it. Inside I would feel, I like to participate and I enjoy helping raise our children. I want to help!

4. When I am asked *"Would* you help me please?" it gives me an opportunity to help, and I am more than willing to support her, but when I hear *"Could* you help me please?" I feel backed up against the wall, as if I have no choice. If I have the ability to help then I am expected to help! I don't feel appreciated.

5. I resent being asked *"could* you." I feel like I have no choice but to say yes. If I say no she will be upset with me. It is not a request but a demand.

6. I keep myself busy or at least pretend to be busy so that the woman I work with doesn't ask me the "could you" question. With "would you" I feel I have a choice, and I want to help.

7. Just this last week my wife asked me, "Could you plant the flowers today?" and without hesitation I said yes. Then when she came home she asked, "Did you plant the flowers?" I said no. She said, "Could you do it tomorrow?" and again, without hesitation, I said yes. This happened every day this week, and the flowers are still not planted. I think if she had asked me "Would you plant the flowers tomorrow?" I would have thought about it, and if I had said yes I would have done it.

8. When I say "Yes, I *could* do that" I am not committing myself to doing it. I am just saying that I *could* do it. I have not promised to do it. If she gets upset with me I feel like she doesn't have a right. If I say I *will* do it, then I can understand why she is upset if I don't do it.

9. I grew up with five sisters, and now I am married and have three daughters. When my wife says "Can you bring out the trash?" I just don't answer. Then she asks "why?" and I don't even know. Now I realize why. I feel controlled. I can respond to "would you?"

10. When I hear a "could you" I'll immediately say yes, and then over the next ten minutes I will realize why I'm not going to do it and then ignore the question. But when I hear a "will you" a part of me comes up saying "Yes, I want to be of service," and then even if objections come up later in my mind, I will still fulfill her request because I have given my word.

11. I will say yes to a "can you," but inside I resent her. I feel that if I say no she will throw a fit. I feel manipulated. When she asks "would you," I feel free to say yes or no. It is then my choice,

and then I want to say yes.

12. When a woman asks me "Would you do this?" I feel assured inside that I am going to get a point for this. I feel appreciated and happy to give.

13. When I hear a "would you" I feel I am being trusted to serve. But when I hear a "can you" or "could you" I hear a question behind the question. She is asking me if I can empty the trash when it is obvious that I could. But behind her question is the request, which she doesn't trust me enough to directly ask.

14. When a woman asks "would you" or "will you" I feel her vulnerability. I am much more sensitive to her and her needs; I definitely don't want to reject her. When she says "could you" I am much more apt to say no because I know it is not a rejection of her. It is simply an impersonal statement saying I can't do it. She won't take it personally if I say no to a "Could you do this?"

15. For me, "would you" makes it personal, and I want to give, but "could you" makes it impersonal, and I will give if it is convenient or if I don't have anything else to do.

16. When a woman says "Could you please help me?" I can feel her resentment and I will resist her, *but* if she says "Would you please help me" I can't hear any resentment, even if there is some. I am willing to say yes.

17. When a woman says "Could you do this for me?" I get kind of honest and say "I'd rather not." The lazy part of me comes out. But when I hear a "Would you please?" I become creative and start thinking of ways to help.

One way women are sure to relate to the significant difference between *would* and *could* is to reflect for a moment on this romantic scene. Imagine a man proposing marriage to a woman. His heart is full, like the moon shining above. Kneeling before her, he reaches out to hold her hands. Then he gazes up into her eyes and gently says, *"Could* you marry me?"

Immediately the romance is gone. Using the *c* word he appears weak and unworthy. In that moment, he reeks of insecurity and low self-esteem. If instead he said *"Would* you marry me?" then both his strength and vulnerability are present. That is the way to propose.

Similarly, a man requires that a woman propose her requests in this manner. Use the *w* words. The *c* words sound too untrusting, indirect, weak, and manipulative.

When she says *"Could* you empty the trash?" the message he receives is "If you *can* empty it then you should do it. I would do it for you!" From his point of view he feels it is obvious that he *can* do it. In neglecting to ask for his support he feels she is manipulating him or taking him for granted. He doesn't feel trusted to be there for her if he can.

I remember one woman in a seminar explaining the difference in Venusian terms. She said, "At first I couldn't feel the difference between these two ways of asking. But then I turned it around. It feels very different to me when he says 'No, I *can't* do it' versus 'No, *I will* not do it.' The 'I *will* not do it' is a personal rejection. If he says 'I can't do it' then it is no reflection on me, it is just that *he* can't do it."

Common Mistakes in Asking

The hardest part of learning to ask is remembering how to do it. Try using the *w* words whenever possible. It will take a lot of practice.

To ask a man for support:

1. Be direct.
2. Be brief.
3. Use "would you" or "will you" phrases.

It's best not to be too indirect, too lengthy, or to employ phrases such as "could you" or "can you." Let's look at some examples.

Do say: "Would you empty the trash?"

Don't say: "This kitchen is a mess; it really stinks. I can't fit anything else into the trash bag. It needs to be emptied. Could you do it?" (This is too long and uses *could.)*

Do say: "Would you help me move this table?"

Don't say: "I can't move this table. I need to rearrange it before our party tonight. Could you please help?" (This is too long and uses *could.)*

Do say: "Would you please put this away for me?"

Don't say: "I can't put all of this away." (This is an indirect message.)

Do say: "Would you bring the groceries in from the car?"

Don't say: "I have four bags of groceries left in the car. And I need that food to make dinner. Could you bring them in?" (This is too long, indirect, and uses *could.)*

Do say: "Would you pick up a bottle of milk on your way home?"

Don't say: "You'll be going by the store. Lauren needs a bottle of milk. I just can't go out again. I am so tired. Today was a bad day. Could you get it?" (This is too long, indirect, and uses *could.)*

Do say: "Would you pick up Julie from school?"

Don't say: "Julie needs a ride home and I can't pick her up. Do you have time? Do you think you could pick her up?" (This is too long, indirect, and uses *could.)*

Do say: "Would you take Zoey to the vet today?"

Don't say: "It's time for Zoey to get her shots. Would you like to take her to the vet?" (This is too indirect.)

Do say: "Would you take us out to dinner tonight?"

Don't say: "I am too tired to make dinner. We haven't gone out in a long time. Do you want to go out?" (This is too lengthy and indirect.)

Do say: "Would you zip me up?"

Don't say: "I need your help. Could you zip me up?" (This is indirect and uses *could.)*

Do say: "Would you build a fire for us tonight?"

Don't say: "It's really cold. Are you going to build a fire?" (This is too indirect.)

Do say: "Would you take me to a movie this week?"

Don't say: "Do you want to go to a movie this week?" (This is too indirect.)

Do say: "Would you help Lauren put on her shoes?"

Don't say: "Lauren still hasn't put on her shoes! We are late. I can't do this all by myself! Could you help?" (This is too long, indirect, and uses *could.)*

Do say: "Would you sit down with me now or sometime tonight and talk about our schedule?"

Don't say: "I have no idea of what's going on. We haven't talked and I need to know what you are doing." (This is too long and indirect.)

As you have probably noticed by now, what you think has been asking is not asking to Martians—they hear something else. It takes a conscious effort to make these little but significant changes in the way you ask for support. I suggest practicing at least three months correcting the way you ask for things before moving on to step two. Other request statements that work are "Would you please …?" and "Would you mind …?"

Start out in step 1 by being aware of how many times you don't ask for support. Become aware of how you do ask when you do. With this increased awareness, then practice asking for what he is already giving you. Remember to be brief and direct. Then give him lots of appreciation and thanks.

Common Questions About Asking for Support

This first step can be difficult. Here are some common questions, which give clues to both the objections and the resistance that women may have.

1. *Question.* A woman might feel, Why should I have to ask him when I don't require him to ask me?

Answer: Remember, men are from Mars; they are different. By accepting and working with his differences you will get what you need. If, instead, you try to change him he will stubbornly resist. Although asking for what you want is not second nature to Venusians, you can do it without giving up who you are. When he feels loved and appreciated he will gradually become more willing to offer his support without being asked. That is a later stage.

2. *Question.* A woman may feel, Why should I appreciate what he does when I am doing more?

Answer: Martians give less when they do not feel appreciated. If you want him to give more, then what he needs is more appreciation. Men are motivated by appreciation. If you are giving more it may, of course, be hard to appreciate him. Gracefully begin to give less so that you can appreciate him more. By making this change, not only are you supporting him in feeling loved, but you will also get the support you need and deserve.

3. *Question.* A woman may feel, If I have to ask him for support, he may think he is doing me a favor.

Answer: This is how he should feel. A gift of love is a favor. When a man feels he is doing you a favor, he is then giving from his heart. Remember, he's a Martian and doesn't keep score the way you do. If he feels that you are telling him he is obligated to give, his heart closes and he gives less.

4. *Question.* A woman may feel, If he loves me he should just offer his support, I shouldn't have to ask.

Answer: Remember men are from Mars; they are different. Men wait to be asked. Instead of thinking, If he loves me he will offer his support, consider this thought, If he were a Venusian he would offer his support, but he's not, he's a Martian. By accepting this difference, he will be much more willing to support you, and gradually he will begin to offer his support.

5. *Question.* A woman may feel, If I have to ask for things he will think I am not giving as much as he is. I am afraid—he may feel like he doesn't have to give me more!

Answer: A man is more generous when he feels as though he doesn't have to give. In addition, when a man hears a woman asking for support (in a respectful way), what he also hears is that she feels entitled to that support. He does not assume she has given less. Quite the contrary, he assumes she must be giving more or at least as much as he is, and that is why she feels good about asking.

6. *Question.* A woman may feel, When I ask for support, I am afraid to be brief. I want to explain why I need his help. I don't want to appear demanding.

Answer: When a man hears a request from his partner, he trusts she has good reasons for asking. If she gives him a lot of reasons why he should fulfill her request, he feels as though he can't say no, and if he can't say no then he feels manipulated or taken for granted. Let him give you a gift instead of taking his support for granted.

If he needs to understand more he will ask why. Then it is OK to give reasons. Even when he asks, be careful not to be too lengthy. Give one, or at most, two reasons. If he still needs more information, he'll let you know.

STEP 2: PRACTICE ASKING FOR MORE (EVEN WHEN YOU KNOW HE MAY SAY NO)

Before attempting to ask a man for more, make sure he feels appreciated for what he is already giving. By continuing to ask for his support without expecting him to do more than he has been doing he will feel not only appreciated but also accepted.

When he is used to hearing you ask for his support without wanting more, he feels loved in your presence. He feels he doesn't have to change to get your love. At this point he will be willing to

change and stretch his ability to support you. At this point you can risk asking for more without giving him the message that he is not good enough.

The second step of this process is to let him realize that he can say no and still receive your love. When he feels that he can say no when you ask for more, he will feel free to say yes or no. Keep in mind that men are much more willing to say yes if they have the freedom to say no.

Men are much more willing to say yes if they have the freedom to say no.

It's important that women learn both how to ask and how to accept no for an answer. Women usually intuitively feel what their partner's response will be even before they ask. If they sense that he will resist their request, they won't even bother asking. Instead, they will feel rejected. He, of course, will have no idea what happened—all this has gone on in her head.

In step 2, practice asking for support in all those situations where you would want to ask but don't because you feel his resistance. Go ahead and ask for support even if you sense his resistance; even if you know he will say no.

For example, a wife might say to her husband, who is focused on watching the news, "Would you go to the grocery store and pick up some salmon for dinner?" When she asks this question, she is already prepared for him to say no. He is probably completely surprised because she has never interrupted him with a request like this before. He will probably make some excuse like "I am right in the middle of watching the news. Can't you do it?"

She may feel like saying "Sure I could do it. But I am always doing everything around here. I don't like being your servant. I want some help!"

When you ask and sense you will get a rejection, prepare yourself for the no and have a ready answer like "OK." If you want to be really Martian in your response, you could say "no problem"—that would be music to his ears. A simple "OK" is fine, however.

It is important to ask and then act as if it is perfectly OK for him to say no. Remember, you're making it safe for him to refuse. Use this approach only for situations that are really OK if he says no. Pick situations where you would appreciate his support but rarely ask for it. Make sure you will feel comfortable if he says no.

These are some examples of what I mean.

When to ask: He is working on something and you want him to pick up the kids. Normally you wouldn't bother him, and so you do it yourself.

What to say: You say "Would you pick up Julie, she just called?"
If he says no, then graciously and simply say "OK."

When to ask: He normally comes home and expects you to make dinner. You want him to make dinner, but you never ask. You sense he

resists cooking.

What to say: You say "Would you help me cut the potatoes?" or "Would you make dinner tonight?"

If he says no, then graciously and simply say "OK."

When to ask: He normally watches TV after dinner while you wash the dishes. You want him to wash them, or at least help, but you never ask. You sense he hates doing dishes. Maybe you don't mind it as much as he does, so you go ahead and do it.

What to say: You say "Would you help me with the dishes tonight?" or "Would you bring in the plates?" or wait for an easy night and say "Would you do the dishes tonight?"

If he says no then graciously and simply say "OK."

When to ask: He wants to go to a movie and you want to go dancing. Normally you sense his desire to see the movie and you don't bother asking to go dancing.

What to say: You say "Would you take me dancing tonight? I love to dance with you."

If he says no, then graciously and simply say "OK."

When to ask: You are both tired and ready to go to bed. The trash is collected the next morning. You sense how tired he is, so you don't ask him to bring the trash out.

What to say: You say "Would you take the trash out?"

If he says no, then graciously and simply say "OK."

When to ask: He is very busy and preoccupied with an important project. You don't want to distract him because you sense how focused he is, but you also want to talk with him. Normally you would sense his resistance and not ask for some time.

What to say: You say "Would you spend some time with me?"

If he says no, then graciously and simply say "OK."

When to ask: He is focused and busy, but you need to pick up your car, which has been in the shop. Normally you anticipate how difficult it will be for him to rearrange his schedule and you don't ask him for a ride.

What to say: You say "Would you give me a ride today to pick up my car? It's being repaired."

If he says no, then graciously and simply say "OK."

"OK." In each of the above examples, be prepared for him to say no and practice being accepting and trusting. Accept his no and trust that he would offer support if he could. Each time you ask a man for support and he isn't made wrong for saying no, he gives you between five and ten points. Next time you ask he will be more responsive to your request. In a sense, by asking for his support in a

loving way, you are helping him stretch his ability to give more.

I first learned this from a woman employee years ago. We were working on a nonprofit project and needed volunteers. She was about to call Tom, who was a friend of mine. I told her not to bother because I already knew he would not be able to help this time. She said she would call anyway. I asked her why, and she said, "When I call I will ask for his support, and when he says no I will be very gracious and understanding. Then next time, when I call for a future project, he will be more willing to say yes. He will have a positive memory of me." She was right.

When you ask a man for support and you do not reject him for saying no, he will remember that, and next time he will be much more willing to give. On the other hand, if you quietly sacrifice your needs and don't ask, he won't have any idea how many times he is needed. How could he know if you don't ask?

When you ask a man for support and you do not reject him for saying no, he will remember that, and next time he will be much more willing to give.

As you gently continue to ask for more, occasionally your partner will be able to stretch his comfort zone and say yes. At this point it has become safe to ask for more. This is one way healthy relationships are built.

Healthy Relationships

A relationship is healthy when both partners have permission to ask for what they want and need, and they both have permission to say no if they choose.

For example, I remember standing in the kitchen with a family friend one day when our daughter Lauren was five years old. She asked me to lift her up and do tricks, and I said, "No, I can't today. I am real tired."

She persisted, asking playfully, "Please, Daddy, please, Daddy, just one flip."

The friend said, "Now, Lauren, your father is tired. He has worked hard today. You shouldn't ask."

Lauren immediately responded by saying, "I am just asking!"

"But you know your father loves you," my friend said. "He can't say no to you."

(The truth is, if he can't say no, that's his problem, not hers.)

Immediately my wife and all three daughters said, "Oh yes he can!"

I was proud of my family. It has taken a lot of work, but gradually we have learned to ask for support and also to accept no.

STEP 3: PRACTICE ASSERTIVE ASKING

Once you have practiced step 2 and you can graciously accept a no, you are ready for step 3. In this step you assert your full power to get what you want. You ask for his support, and if he starts making excuses and resists your request, you don't say "OK" as in step 2. Instead you practice making it OK that he resists but continue waiting for him to say yes.

Let's say he is on his way to bed, and you ask him, "Would you go to the store and get some milk." In his response, he says "Oh, I'm really tired, I want to go to bed."

Instead of immediately letting him off the hook by saying "OK," say nothing. Stand there and accept that he is resisting your request. By not resisting his resistance there is a much greater chance he will say yes.

The art of assertive asking is to remain silent after you have made a request. After you have asked, expect him to moan, groan, scowl, growl, mumble, and grumble. I call the resistance men have to responding to requests the grumbles. The more focused a man is at the time, the more he will grumble. His grumbles have nothing to do with his willingness to support; they are a symptom of how focused he is at the time when asked.

A woman will generally misinterpret a man's grumbles. She mistakenly assumes that he is unwilling to fulfill her request. This is not the case. His grumbles are a sign that he is in the process of considering her request. If he was not considering her request then he would very calmly say no. When a man grumbles it is a good sign—he is trying to consider your request versus his needs.

When a man grumbles it is a good sign—he is trying to consider your request versus his needs.

He will go through internal resistance at shifting his direction from what he's focusing on to your request. Like opening a door with rusty hinges, the man will make unusual noises. By ignoring his grumbles they quickly go away.

Often when a man grumbles he is in the process of saying yes to your request. Because most women misunderstand this reaction, they either avoid asking him for support or they take it personally and reject him in return.

In our example, where he is headed for bed and you ask him to go to the store for milk, he is likely to grumble.

"I'm tired," he says with an annoyed look. "I want to go to bed."

If you misunderstand his response as a rejection, you might reply with "I made you dinner, I washed the dishes, I got the kids ready for bed, and all you did was plant yourself on this couch! I don't ask for much, but at least you could help now. I am so exhausted. I feel like I do everything around here."

The argument starts. On the other hand, if you know that grumbles are just grumbles and are often his way of starting to say yes, your response will be silence. Your silence is a signal that you trust

that he is stretching inside and about to say yes.

Stretching is another way to understand a man's resistance to your requests. Whenever you ask for more, he has to stretch himself. If he is not in shape, he can't do it. That is why you have to prepare a man for step 3 by moving through steps 1 and 2.

In addition, you know that it is more difficult to stretch in the morning. Later in the day you can stretch much farther and easier. When a man grumbles, just imagine that he is stretching in the morning. Once he has finished stretching he will feel great. He just needs to grumble first.

Programming a Man to Say Yes

I first became conscious of this process when my wife asked me to buy some milk at the store when I was on my way to bed. I remember grumbling out loud. Instead of arguing with me, she just listened, assuming that eventually I would do it. Then finally I made a few banging noises on my way out, got in my car, and went to the store.

Then something happened, something that happens to all men, something that women don't know about. As I now moved closer to my new goal, the milk, my grumbles went away. I started feeling my love for my wife and my willingness to support. I started feeling like the good guy. Believe me, I liked that feeling.

By the time I was in the store, I was happy to be getting the milk. When my hand reached the bottle, I had achieved my new goal. Achievement always makes men feel good. I playfully picked up the bottle in my right hand and turned around with a look of pride that said "Hey, look at me. I'm getting the milk for my wife. I am one of those great generous guys. What a guy."

When I returned with the milk, she was happy to see me. She gave me a big hug and said, "Thank you so much. I'm so glad I didn't have to get dressed."

If she had ignored me, I probably would have resented her. Next time she asked me to buy the milk I would have probably grumbled even more. But she didn't ignore me, she gave me lots of love.

I watched my reaction and heard myself think, What a wonderful wife I have. Even after I was so resistant and grumbly she is still appreciating me.

The next time she asked me to buy the milk, I grumbled less. When I returned she was again appreciative. The third time, automatically I said, "Sure."

Then a week later, I noticed that she was low on milk. I offered to get it. She said she was already going to the store. To my surprise a part of me was disappointed! I wanted to get the milk. Her love had programmed me to say yes. Even to this day whenever she asks me to go to the store and get milk a part of me happily says yes.

I personally experienced this inner transformation. Her acceptance of my grumbles and appreciation of me when I returned healed my resistance. From that time on, as she practiced assertive asking, it was much easier for me to respond to her requests.

The Pregnant Pause

One of the key elements of assertive asking is to remain silent after you have asked for support.

Allow your partner to work through their resistance. Be careful not to disapprove of his grumbles. As long as you pause and remain silent, you have the possibility of getting his support. If you break the silence you lose your power.

Women unknowingly break the silence and lose their power by making comments like:

- "Oh, forget it."
- "I can't believe you are saying no. I do so much for you."
- "I don't ask you for much."
- "It will only take you fifteen minutes."
- "I feel disappointed. This really hurts my feelings."
- "You mean you won't do this for me."
- "Why can't you do it?"

Etc., etc., etc. You get the idea. When he grumbles, she feels the urge to defend her request and mistakenly breaks her silence. She argues with her partner in an attempt to convince him that he should do it. Whether he does it or not, he will be more resistant next time she asks for his support.

One of the key elements of assertive asking is to remain silent after you have asked for support.

To give him a chance to fulfill your requests, ask and pause. Let him grumble and say things. Just listen. Eventually he will say yes. Don't mistakenly believe that he will hold this against you. He can't and won't hold it against you as long as you don't insist or argue with him. Even if he walks off grumbling, he will let go of it, if both of you feel it is his choice to do or not to do it.

Sometimes, however, he may not say yes. Or he may try to argue his way out by asking you some questions. Be careful. During your pause he may ask questions like:

- "Why can't you do it?"
- "I really don't have time. Would you do it?"
- "I am busy, I don't have time. What are you doing?"

Sometimes these are just rhetorical questions. So you can remain quiet. Don't speak unless it is clear that he is really looking for an answer. If he wants an answer, give him one, but be very brief, and then ask again. Assertive asking means asking with a sense of confidence and trust that he will support you if he can.

If he questions you or says no, then respond with a brief answer giving the message that your need is just as great as his. Then ask again.

Here are some examples.

What he says in resistance to her request: "I don't have time. Can't you do it?"

How she can respond with assertive asking: "I'm also rushed. Would you please do it?"

Then remain silent again.

What he says in resistance to her request: "No, I don't want to do that."

How she can respond with assertive asking: "I would really appreciate it. Will you please do it for me?"

Then remain silent again.

What he says in resistance to her request: "I'm busy, what are you doing?"

How she can respond with assertive asking: "I'm busy too. Will you please do it?"

Then remain silent again.

What he says in resistance to her request: "No, I don't feel like it."

How she can respond with assertive asking: "I don't feel like it either. Would you please do it?"

Then remain silent again.

Notice that she is not trying to convince him but is simply matching his resistance. If he is tired, don't try to prove that you are more tired and therefore he should help you. Or if he thinks he is too busy don't try to convince him that you are more busy. Avoid giving him reasons why he should do it. Remember, you are just asking and not demanding.

If he continues to resist then practice step two and graciously accept his rejection. This is not the time to share how disappointed you are. Be assured that if you can let go at this time, he will remember how loving you were and be more willing to support you next time.

As you progress you will experience greater success in asking for and getting his support. Even if you are practicing the pregnant pause of step three, it is still necessary to continue practicing steps one and two. It is always important that you continue to ask correctly for the little things as well as graciously accept his rejections.

WHY MEN ARE SO SENSITIVE

You may be asking yourself why men are so sensitive about being asked for support. It is not because men are lazy but because men have so much need to feel accepted. Any request to be more or to give more might instead give the message that he is not accepted just the way he is.

Just as a woman is more sensitive about being heard and feeling understood when she is sharing her feelings, a man is more sensitive about being accepted just the way he is. Any attempt to improve him makes him feel as though you are trying to change him because he is not good enough.

On Mars, the motto is "Don't fix it unless it is broken." When a man feels a woman wanting more,

and that she is trying to change him, he receives the message that she feels he is broken; naturally he doesn't feel loved just the way he is.

By learning the art of asking for support, your relationships will gradually become greatly enriched. As you are able to receive more of the love and support you need, your partner will also naturally be quite happy. Men are happiest when they feel they have succeeded in fulfilling the people they care about. By learning to ask correctly for support you not only help your man feel more loved but also ensure you'll get the love you need and deserve.

In the next chapter we will explore the secret of keeping the magic of love alive.

13

Keeping the Magic of Love Alive

One of the paradoxes of loving relationships is that when things are going well and we are feeling loved, we may suddenly find ourselves emotionally distancing our partners or reacting to them in unloving ways. Maybe you can relate to some of these examples:

1. You may be feeling a lot of love for your partner, and then, the next morning, you wake up and are annoyed and resentful of him or her.

2. You are loving, patient, and accepting, and then, the next day, you become demanding or dissatisfied.

3. You can't imagine not loving your partner, and then, the next day, you have an argument and suddenly begin thinking about divorce.

4. Your partner does something loving for you, and you feel resentful for the times in the past when he or she ignored you.

5. You are attracted to your partner, and then suddenly you feel numb in his or her presence.

6. You are happy with your partner and then suddenly feel insecure about the relationship or powerless to get what you need.

7. You feel confident and assured that your partner loves you and suddenly you feel desperate and needy.

8. You are generous with your love, and then suddenly you become withholding, judgmental, critical, angry, or controlling.

9. You are attracted to your partner, and then when he or she makes a commitment you lose your attraction or you find others more attractive.

10. You want to have sex with your partner, but when he or she wants it, you don't want it.

11. You feel good about yourself and your life and then, suddenly, you begin feeling unworthy, abandoned, and inadequate.

12. You have a wonderful day and look forward to seeing your partner, but when you see him or her, something that your partner says makes you feel disappointed, depressed, repelled, tired, or emotionally distant.

Maybe you have noticed your partner going through some of these changes as well. Take a moment to reread the above list, thinking about how your partner may suddenly lose his or her ability to give you the love you deserve. Probably you have experienced his or her sudden shifts at times. It is very common for two people who are madly in love one day to hate each other or fight the very next day.

These sudden shifts are confusing. Yet they are common. If we don't understand why they happen we may think we are going crazy, or we may mistakenly conclude that our love has died. Fortunately there is an explanation.

Love brings up our unresolved feelings. One day we are feeling loved, and the next day we are suddenly afraid to trust love. The painful memories of being rejected begin to surface when we are faced with trusting and accepting our partner's love.

Whenever we are loving ourselves more or being loved by others, repressed feelings tend to come up and temporarily overshadow our loving awareness. They come up to be healed and released. We may suddenly become irritable, defensive, critical, resentful, demanding, numb, or angry.

Feelings that we could not express in our past suddenly flood our consciousness when we are safe to feel. Love thaws out our repressed feelings, and gradually these unresolved feelings begin to surface into our relationship.

It is as though your unresolved feelings wait until you are feeling loved, and then they come up to be healed. We are all walking around with a bundle of unresolved feelings, the wounds from our past, that lie dormant within us until the time comes when we feel loved. Then, when we feel safe to be ourselves, our hurt feelings come up.

If we can successfully deal with those feelings, then we feel much better and enliven more of our creative, loving potential. If, however, we get into a fight and blame our partner instead of healing our past, we just get upset and then suppress the feelings again.

How Repressed Feelings Come Up

The problem is that repressed feelings don't come up saying "Hi, I am your unresolved feelings from the past." If your feelings of abandonment or rejection from childhood start coming up, then you will feel you are being abandoned or rejected by your partner. The pain of the past is projected onto the present. Things that normally would not be a big deal hurt a lot.

For years we have suppressed our painful feelings. Then one day we fall in love, and love makes us feel safe enough to open up and become aware of our feelings. Love opens us up and we start to feel our pain.

Why Couples May Fight During Good Times

Our past feelings suddenly come up not just when we fall in love but at other times when we are feeling really good, happy, or loving. At these positive times, couples may unexplainably fight when it seems as though they should be happy.

For example, couples may fight when they move into a new home, redecorate, attend a graduation, a religious celebration, or a wedding, receive presents, go on a vacation or car ride, finish a project, celebrate Christmas or Thanksgiving, decide to change a negative habit, buy a new car, make a

positive career change, win a lottery, make a lot of money, decide to spend a lot of money, or have great love making.

At all of these special occasions one or both partners may suddenly experience unexplained moods and reactions; the upset tends to be either before, during, or right after the occasion. It may be very insightful to review the above list of special occasions and reflect on how your parents might have experienced these occasions as well as reflect on how you have experienced these occasions in your relationships.

THE 90/10 PRINCIPLE

By understanding how past unresolved feelings periodically surface, it is easy to understand why we can become so easily hurt by our partners. When we are upset, about 90 percent of the upset is related to our past and has nothing to do with what we think is upsetting us. Generally only about 10 percent of our upset is appropriate to the present experience.

Let's look at an example. If our partner seems a little critical of us, it may hurt our feelings a little. But because we are adults we are capable of understanding that they don't mean to be critical or maybe we see that they had a bad day. This understanding prevents their criticism from being too hurtful. We don't take it personally.

But on another day their criticism is very painful. On this other day our wounded feelings from the past are on their way up. As a result we are more vulnerable to our partner's criticism. It hurts a lot because as a child we were criticized severely. Our partner's criticism hurts more because it triggers our past hurt as well.

As a child we were not able to understand that we were innocent and that our parents' negativity was their problem. In childhood we take all criticism, rejection, and blame personally.

When these unresolved feelings from childhood are coming up, we easily interpret our partner's comments as criticism, rejection, and blame. Having adult discussions at these times is hard. Everything is misunderstood. When our partner seems critical, 10 percent of our reaction relates to their effect on us and 90 percent relates to our past.

Imagine someone poking your arm a little or gently bumping into you. It doesn't hurt a lot. Now imagine you have an open wound or sore and someone starts poking at it or bumps into you. It hurts much more. In the same way, if unresolved feelings are coming up, we will be overly sensitive to the normal pokes and bumps of relating.

In the beginning of a relationship we may not be as sensitive. It takes time for our past feelings to come up. But when they do come up, we react differently to our partners. In most relationships, 90 percent of what is upsetting to us would not be upsetting if our past unresolved feelings were not coming up.

How We Can Support Each Other

When a man's past comes up, he generally heads for his cave. He is overly sensitive at those times and needs a lot of acceptance. When a woman's past comes up is when her self-esteem crashes. She descends into the well of her feelings and needs tender loving care.

This insight helps you to control your feelings when they come up. If you are upset with your partner, before confronting him or her first write out your feelings on paper. Through the process of writing Love Letters your negativity will be automatically released and your past hurt will be healed. Love Letters help center you in present time so that you can respond to your partner in a more trusting, accepting, understanding, and forgiving way.

Understanding the 90/10 principle also helps when your partner is reacting strongly to you. Knowing that he or she is being influenced by the past can help you to be more understanding and supportive.

Never tell your partner, when it appears as though their "stuff" is coming up, that they are overreacting. That just hurts them more. If you poked someone right in the middle of a wound you wouldn't tell them they were overreacting.

Understanding how the feelings of the past come up gives us a greater understanding of why our partners react the way they do. It is part of their healing process. Give them some time to cool off and become centered again. If it is too difficult to listen to their feelings, encourage them to write you a Love Letter before you talk about what was so upsetting.

A Healing Letter

Understanding how your past affects your present reactions helps you heal your feelings. If your partner has upset you in some way, write them a Love Letter, and while you are writing ask yourself how this relates to your past. As you write you may find memories coming up from your past and discover that you are really upset with your own mother or father. At this point continue writing but now address your letter to your parent. Then write a loving Response Letter. Share this letter with your partner.

They will like hearing your letter. It feels great when your partner takes responsibility for the 90 percent of their hurt that comes from the past. Without this understanding of our past we tend to blame our partners, or at least they feel blamed.

If you want your partner to be more sensitive to your feelings, let them experience the painful feelings of your past. Then they can understand your sensitivities. Love Letters are an excellent opportunity to do this.

YOU ARE NEVER UPSET FOR THE REASON YOU THINK

As you practice writing Love Letters and exploring your feelings you will begin to discover that generally you are upset for different reasons than you first think. By experiencing and feeling the deeper reasons, negativity tends to disappear. Just as we suddenly can be gripped by negative emotions we can also suddenly release them. These are a few examples:

1. One morning Jim woke up feeling annoyed with his partner. Whatever she did disturbed him. As he wrote her a Love Letter he discovered that he was really upset with his mother for being so controlling. These feelings were just coming up, so he wrote a short Love Letter to his mother. To write this letter he imagined he was back when he was feeling controlled. After he wrote the letter suddenly he was no longer upset with his partner.

2. After months of falling in love, Lisa suddenly became critical of her partner. As she wrote a Love Letter she discovered that she was really feeling afraid that she was not good enough for him and afraid he was no longer interested in her. By becoming aware of her deeper fears she started to feel her loving feelings again.

3. After spending a romantic evening together, Bill and Jean got in a terrible fight the next day. It started when Jean became a little angry with him for forgetting to do something. Instead of being his usual understanding self, suddenly Bill felt like he wanted a divorce. Later as he wrote a Love Letter he realized he was really afraid of being left or abandoned. He remembered how he felt as a child when his parents fought. He wrote a letter to his parents, and suddenly he felt loving toward his wife again.

4. Susan's husband, Tom, was busy meeting a deadline at work. When he came home Susan felt extremely resentful and angry. One part of her understood the stress he was under, but emotionally she was still angry. While writing him a Love Letter she discovered that she was angry with her father for leaving her alone with her abusive mother. As a child she had felt powerless and abandoned, and these feelings were again coming up to be healed. She wrote a Love Letter to her father and suddenly she was no longer angry with Tom.

5. Rachel was attracted to Phil until he said he loved her and wanted to make a commitment. The next day her mood suddenly changed. She began to have a lot of doubts and her passion disappeared. As she wrote him a Love Letter she discovered that she was angry with her father for being so passive and hurting her mother. After she wrote a Love Letter to her father and released her negative feelings, she suddenly felt attracted again to Phil.

As you begin practicing Love Letters, you may not always experience past memories and feelings. But as you open up and go deeper into your feelings, it will become clearer that when you are really upset it is about something in your past as well.

THE DELAYED-REACTION RESPONSE

Just as love may bring up our past unresolved feelings, so does getting what you want. I remember when I first learned about this. Many years ago I had wanted sex from my partner, but she wasn't in the mood. In my mind I accepted that. The next day I hinted around, and she still was not interested. This pattern continued every day.

By the end of two weeks I was beginning to feel resentful. But at that time in my life I didn't know how to communicate feelings. Instead of talking about my feelings and my frustration I just kept pretending as if everything were OK. I was stuffing my negative feelings and trying to be loving. For two weeks my resentment continued to build.

I did everything I knew to please her and make her happy, while inside I was resenting her rejection of me. At the end of two weeks I went out and bought her a pretty nightgown. I brought it home and that evening I gave it to her. She opened the box and was happily surprised. I asked her to try it on. She said she wasn't in the mood.

At this point I gave up. I just forgot about sex. I buried myself in work and gave up my desire for

sex. In my mind I made it OK by suppressing my feelings of resentment. About two weeks later, however, when I came home from work, she had prepared a romantic meal and was wearing the nightgown I had bought her two weeks before. The lights were low and soft music was on in the background.

You can imagine my reaction. All of a sudden I felt a surge of resentment. Inside I felt "Now you suffer for four weeks." All of the resentment that I had suppressed for the last four weeks suddenly was coming up. After talking about these feelings I realized that her willingness to give me what I wanted released my old resentments.

When Couples Suddenly Feel Their Resentment

I began to see this pattern in many other situations. In my counseling practice, I also observed this phenomenon. When one partner was finally willing to make a change for the better, the other would become suddenly indifferent and unappreciative.

As soon as Bill was willing to give Mary what she had been asking for, she would have a resentful reaction like "Well, it is too late" or "So what."

Repeatedly I have counseled couples who have been married for over twenty years. Their children have grown up and left home. Suddenly the woman wants a divorce. The man wakes up and realizes that he wants to change and get help. As he starts to make changes and give her the love she has been wanting for twenty years, she reacts with cold resentment.

It is as though she wants him to suffer for twenty years just as she did. Fortunately that is not the case. As they continue to share feelings and he hears and understands how she has been neglected, she gradually becomes more receptive to his changes. This can also go the other way; a man wants to leave and the woman becomes willing to change, but he resists.

The Crisis of Rising Expectations

Another example of the delayed reaction occurs on a social level. In sociology it is called the crisis of rising expectations. It occurred in the sixties during the Johnson administration. For the first time minorities were given more rights than ever before. As a result there were explosions of anger, rioting, and violence. All of the pent-up racial feelings were suddenly released.

This is another example of repressed feelings surfacing. When the minorities felt more supported they felt an upsurge of resentful and angry feelings. The unresolved feelings of the past started coming up. A similar reaction is occurring now in countries where people are finally gaining their freedom from abusive government leaders.

WHY HEALTHY PEOPLE MAY NEED COUNSELING

As you grow more intimate in your relationships, love increases. As a result, deeper, more painful feelings will come up that need to be healed—deep feelings like shame and fear. Because we generally do not know how to deal with these painful feelings, we become stuck.

To heal them we need to share them, but we are too afraid or ashamed to reveal what we are

feeling. At such times we may become depressed, anxious, bored, resentful, or simply exhausted for no apparent reason at all. These are all symptoms of our "stuff" coming up and being blocked.

Instinctively you will want to either run away from love or increase your addictions. This is the time to work on your feelings and not run away. When deep feelings come up you would be very wise to get the help of a therapist.

When deep feelings come up, we project our feelings onto our partner. If we did not feel safe to express our feelings to our parents or a past partner, all of a sudden we cannot get in touch with our feelings in the presence of our *present* partner. At this point, no matter how supportive your partner is, when you are with your partner you will not feel safe. Feelings will be blocked.

It is a paradox: because you feel safe with your partner, your deepest fears have a chance to surface. When they surface you become afraid and are unable to share what you feel. Your fear may even make you numb. When this happens the feelings that are coming up get stuck.

It is a paradox: because you feel safe with your partner, your deepest fears have a chance to surface. When they surface you become afraid and are unable to share what you feel.

This is when having a counselor or therapist is tremendously helpful. When you are with someone you are not projecting your fears on, you can process the feelings that are coming up. But if you are only with your partner, you may feel numb.

This is why people with even very loving relationships may inevitably need the help of a therapist. Sharing in support groups also has this liberating effect. Being with others whom we don't know intimately but who are supportive creates an opening for our wounded feelings to be shared.

When our unresolved feelings are being projected on our intimate partner, he or she is powerless to help us. All our partner can do is encourage us to get support. Understanding how our past continues to affect our relationships frees us to accept the ebb and flow of love. We begin to trust love and its healing process. To keep the magic of love alive we must be flexible and adapt to the ongoing changing seasons of love.

THE SEASONS OF LOVE

A relationship is like a garden. If it is to thrive it must be watered regularly. Special care must be given, taking into account the seasons as well as any unpredictable weather. New seeds must be sown and weeds must be pulled. Similarly, to keep the magic of love alive we must understand its seasons and nurture love's special needs.

The Springtime of Love

Falling in love is like springtime. We feel as though we will be happy forever. We cannot imagine not loving our partner. It is a time of innocence. Love seems eternal. It is a magical time when everything seems perfect and works effortlessly. Our partner seems to be the perfect fit. We effortlessly dance together in harmony and rejoice in our good fortune.

The Summer of Love

Throughout the summer of our love we realize our partner is not as perfect as we thought, and we have to work on our relationship. Not only is our partner from another planet, but he or she is also a human who makes mistakes and is flawed in certain ways.

Frustration and disappointment arise; weeds need to be uprooted and plants need extra watering under the hot sun. It is no longer easy to give love and get the love we need. We discover that we are not always happy, and we do not always feel loving. It is not our picture of love.

Many couples at this point become disillusioned. They do not want to work on a relationship. They unrealistically expect it to be spring all the time. They blame their partners and give up. They do not realize that love is not always easy; sometimes it requires hard work under a hot sun. In the summer season of love, we need to nurture our partner's needs as well as ask for and get the love we need. It doesn't happen automatically.

The Autumn of Love

As a result of tending the garden during the summer, we get to harvest the results of our hard work. Fall has come. It is a golden time—rich and fulfilling. We experience a more mature love that accepts and understands our partner's imperfections as well as our own. It is a time of thanksgiving and sharing. Having worked hard during summer we can relax and enjoy the love we have created.

The Winter of Love

Then the weather changes again, and winter comes. During the cold, barren months of winter, all of nature pulls back within itself. It is a time of rest, reflection, and renewal. This is a time in relationships when we experience our own unresolved pain or our shadow self. It is when our lid comes off and our painful feelings emerge. It is a time of solitary growth when we need to look more to ourselves than to our partners for love and fulfillment. It is a time of healing. This is the time when men hibernate in their caves and women sink to the bottom of their wells.

After loving and healing ourselves through the dark winter of love, then spring inevitably returns. Once again we are blessed with the feelings of hope, love, and an abundance of possibilities. Based on the inner healing and soul searching of our wintery journey, we are then able to open our hearts and feel the springtime of love.

SUCCESSFUL RELATIONSHIPS

After studying this guide for improving communication and getting what you want in your

relationships, you are well prepared for having successful relationships. You have good reason to feel hopeful for yourself. You will weather well through the seasons of love.

I have witnessed thousands of couples transform their relationships—some literally overnight. They come on Saturday of my weekend relationship seminar and by dinnertime on Sunday they are in love again. By applying the insights you have gained through reading this book and by remembering that men are from Mars and women are from Venus you will experience the same success.

But I caution you to remember that love is seasonal. In spring it is easy, but in summer it is hard work. In autumn you may feel very generous and fulfilled, but in winter you will feel empty. The information you need to get through summer and work on your relationship is easily forgotten. The love you feel in fall is easily lost in winter.

In the summer of love, when things get difficult and you are not getting the love you need, quite suddenly you may forget everything you have learned in this book. In an instant it is all gone. You may begin to blame your partner and forget how to nurture their needs.

When the emptiness of winter sets in, you may feel hopeless. You may blame yourself and forget how to love and nurture yourself. You may doubt yourself and your partner. You may become cynical and feel like giving up. This is all a part of the cycle. It is always darkest before the dawn.

To be successful in our relationships we must accept and understand the different seasons of love. Sometimes love flows easily and automatically; at other times it requires effort. Sometimes our hearts are full and at other times we are empty. We must not expect our partners to always be loving or even to remember how to be loving. We must also give ourselves this gift of understanding and not expect to remember everything we have learned about being loving.

The process of learning requires not only hearing and applying but also forgetting and then remembering again. Throughout this book you have learned things that your parents could not teach you. They did not know. But now that you know, please be realistic. Give yourself permission to keep making mistakes. Many of the new insights you have gained will be forgotten for a time.

Education theory states that to learn something new we need to hear it two hundred times. We cannot expect ourselves (or our partners) to remember all of the new insights in this book. We must be patient and appreciative of their every little step. It takes time to work with these ideas and integrate them into your life.

Not only do we need to hear it two hundred times but we also need to unlearn what we have learned in the past. We are not innocent children learning how to have successful relationships. We have been programmed by our parents, by the culture we have grown up in, and by our own painful past experiences. Integrating this new wisdom of having loving relationships is a new challenge. You are a pioneer. You are traveling in new territory. Expect to be lost sometimes. Expect your partner to be lost. Use this guide as a map to lead you through uncharted lands again and again.

Next time you are frustrated with the opposite sex, remember men are from Mars and women are from Venus. Even if you don't remember anything else from this book, remembering that we are supposed to be different will help you to be more loving. By gradually releasing your judgments and blame and persistently asking for what you want, you can create the loving relationships you want, need, and deserve.

You have a lot to look forward to. May you continue to grow in love and light. Thank you for letting me make a difference in your life.

If you like what you have read, and you want more for your company, organization, or yourself, consider:

MARS VENUS IN THE WORKPLACE SEMINARS

Thousands of individuals and companies around the world have already benefited from John Gray's workplace seminars. We invite you to share an inspiring presentation or workshop with your company. MARS VENUS IN THE WORKPLACE seminars are designed to enhance gender communication in the workplace at all levels. Presentations are made by John Gray or one of his many trainers. Each seminar can easily be tailored to the unique needs of your company or organization. Please call our representatives toll-free at 1-888-MARSVENUS (1-888-627-7836) or visit John Gray's web site at www.marsvenus.com for booking information.

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The MARS VENUS INSTITUTE offers workshops that bring information to local communities and organizations around the world and trains those interested in presenting these workshops. MARS VENUS workshops focus on different topics, including improving communication, understanding differences, dating, starting over, parenting, and achieving personal success. These fun and insightful workshops feature favorite video segments from live seminars by John Gray, along with workbooks and exercises for participants to apply the information. A current schedule of workshops available throughout the world can be found on the web site. To facilitate a workshop for your school, church, organization, or community, please call 1-888-MARSVENUS (1-888-627-7836). Becoming a facilitator is easy. You can be trained to present these workshops over the Internet or through correspondence.

MARS VENUS COUNSELING CENTERS

In response to the thousands of requests we have received for licensed professionals who use the MARS VENUS principles in their practices, John Gray has provided a training program for licensed professionals to provide the MARS VENUS approach to their clients. Participants in this program have completed a rigorous study of John's work and have demonstrated a commitment to his valuable concepts. If you are interested in a referral to a counselor in your area or you seek information to be trained as a MARS VENUS counselor or to establish a MARS VENUS counseling center, please call 1-888-MARSVENUS (1-888-627-7836).

Reading John Gray's books and listening to his tapes have helped millions of individuals to improve communication and get what they want in their relationships. Whether you are single or married, it is never too late or too early to understand the ways men and women are different. This valuable resource can be enriched by talking to a MARS VENUS relationship coach on the phone.

When you feel the need to talk with someone like you or of the opposite sex, who is also familiar with the MARS VENUS principles and insights, he or she is only a phone call away. By calling a MARS VENUS coach, you will receive personal attention to your specific needs. In the privacy of your own home, with complete anonymity, you can freely share your concerns and questions to sort out what you feel and then decide what you want to do. You decide when and how long you want to talk. Call 1-888-MARSVENUS (1-888-627-7836) or visit www.askmarsvenus.com.

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If you do not have Internet access and would like the information on any of the above topics, please call toll-free 1-888-MARSVENUS (1-888-627-7836).

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John's books, audio and video programs, and game are developed for all ages and stages of relationships. You can purchase all of his products easily online when you visit the store at www.marsvenus.com. Each week a different program is discounted specially for MARS VENUS online visitors.

If you don't have Internet access and desire further explorations of the wonderful world of Mars and Venus, or if you wish to make an order or receive additional information, please call toll-free 1-888-MARSVENUS (1-888-627-7836).

Acknowledgments

I **thank my wife, Bonnie,** for sharing the journey of developing this book with me. I thank her for allowing me to share our stories and especially for expanding my understanding and ability to honor the female point of view.

I thank our three daughters, Shannon, Julie, and Lauren, for their continued love and appreciation. The challenge of being a parent has allowed me to understand the struggles my parents had and love them even more. Being a father has especially assisted me in understanding and loving my father.

I thank my father and mother for their loving efforts to raise a family of seven children. I thank my oldest brother, David, for understanding my feelings and admiring my words. I thank my brother William for motivating me to higher achievements. I thank my brother Robert for all the long and interesting conversations we had until dawn and for his brilliant ideas, from which I always benefit. I thank my brother Tom for his encouragement and positive spirit. I thank my sister Virginia for believing in me and appreciating my seminars. I thank my deceased younger brother Jimmy for his love and admiration, which continue to support me through my difficult times.

I thank my agent, Patti Breitman, whose help, brilliant creativity, and enthusiasm have guided this book from its conception to its completion. I thank Carole Bidnick for her inspired support at the beginning of this project. I thank Susan Moldow and Nancy Peske for their expert feedback and advice. I thank the staff at HarperCollins for their continued responsiveness to my needs.

I thank all the thousands who participated in my relationship seminars, shared their stories, and encouraged me to write this book. Their positive and loving feedback has supported me in developing this simple presentation of such a complex subject.

I thank my clients who have shared their struggles so intimately and trusted my assistance in their journey.

I thank Steve Martineau for his skillful wisdom and influence, which can be found sprinkled through this book.

I thank my different promoters, who have put their hearts and souls into producing the John Gray Relationship Seminars where this material was tried, tested, and developed: Elley and Ian Coren in Santa Cruz; Debra Mudd, Gary and Helen Francell in Honolulu; Bill and Judy Elbring in San Francisco; David Obstfeld and Fred Kliner in Washington, D.C.; Elizabeth Kling in Baltimore; Clark and Dottie Bartell in Seattle; Michael Najarian in Phoenix; Gloria Manchester in L.A.; Sandee Mac in Houston; Earlene Carrillo in Las Vegas; David Farlow in San Diego; Bart and Merril Jacobs in Dallas; and Ove Johhansson and Ewa Martensson in Stockholm.

I thank Richard Cohen and Cindy Black at Beyond Words Publishing for their loving and genuine support of my book *Men, Women and Relationships*, which gave birth to the ideas in this book.

I thank John Vestman at Trianon Studios for his expert audio recordings of my whole seminar and Dave Morton and the staff of Cassette Express for their continued appreciation of this material and their quality service.

I thank the members of my men's group for sharing their stories, and I especially thank Lenney Eiger, Charles Wood, Jacques Early, David Placek, and Chris Johns, who gave me such valuable feedback for editing the manuscript.

I thank my secretary, Ariana, for efficiently and responsibly taking over the office during this project.

I thank my lawyer (and adopted grandfather of my children), Jerry Riefold, for always being there.

I thank Clifford McGuire for his continued friendship of twenty years. I could not ask for a better sounding board and friend.

About the Author

John Gray, Ph.D., an internationally recognized expert in the fields of communication and relationships, and author of twelve bestsellers, has been conducting personal growth seminars for thirty years. He is a certified family therapist (National Academy for Certified Therapists), a consulting editor of *The Family Journal*, a member of the Distinguished Advisory Board of the International Association of Marriage and Family Counselors, and a member of the American Counseling Association. John lives with his wife and three children in northern California.

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EPub Edition © AUGUST 2013 ISBN: 9780061793363

Version 07192013

First Quill edition published 2004.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available.

ISBN 0-06-057421-6

04 05 06 07 08 ❖ /RRD 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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